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A CHRISTMAS CAROL
ALL NEW MARVEL CLASSICS COMICS
A CHRISTMAS CAROL
ADAPTED FROM THE CLASSIC NOVEL BY CHARLES DICKENS
EBENEZER SCROOGE

STAN LEE presents

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by Charles Dickens

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England, on February 7th, 1822. His father was a clerk who worked for the Navy. Young Charles attended school intermittently until the age of fourteen and then left entirely. He became a newspaper reporter in the 1820s, covering debates in Parliament and writing articles. Eventually, Dickens founded and edited two weekly magazines *Household Words* (1850) and *All The Year Round* (1859). He married in 1863 and separated from his wife in 1858, after the birth of ten children. For most of his life, he was an active, virile man, but his health declined in 1866, and he died of a stroke in 1870.

Dickens' first literary recognition came after the publication of *The Posthumous Papers of The Pickwick Club* (1836), which was a humorous tale detailing the misadventures of a group of eccentric characters in London. After its success, Dickens' writing took a more serious turn, though some element of humor almost always was present in his books.

His next work, and the one which served as a major stepping stone in his climb towards literary immortality was *Oliver Twist* (1837). In this novel, Dickens hit upon the theme for which he is best known: society's mistreatment of the poor and disadvantaged. He was to pursue this topic with devastating efficacy in such classics as *David Copperfield* (1849), *Bleak House* (1864), and, of course *A Christmas Carol* (1843). Although this last mentioned novel has more of a fairy tale quality to it than his other works, the elements of the rich versus poor theme are never far from the reader's mind.

In his later years, Dickens' work reflects a growing bitterness toward Victorian society's intransigence and uncaring attitude toward its poor. Yet, his novels always displayed a great author's ability to weave a compelling narrative without lapsing into pamphleteering or pedantry.

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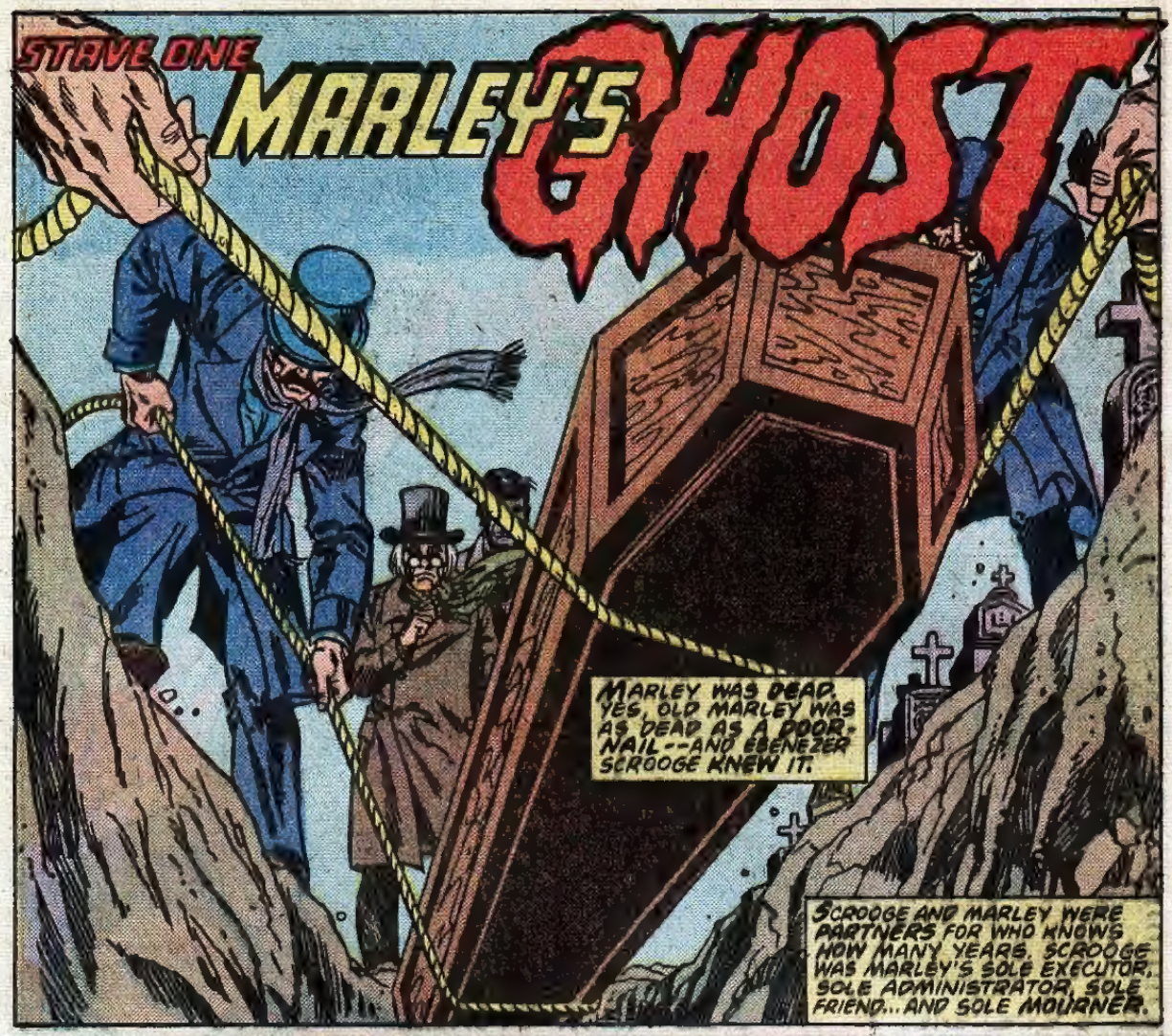
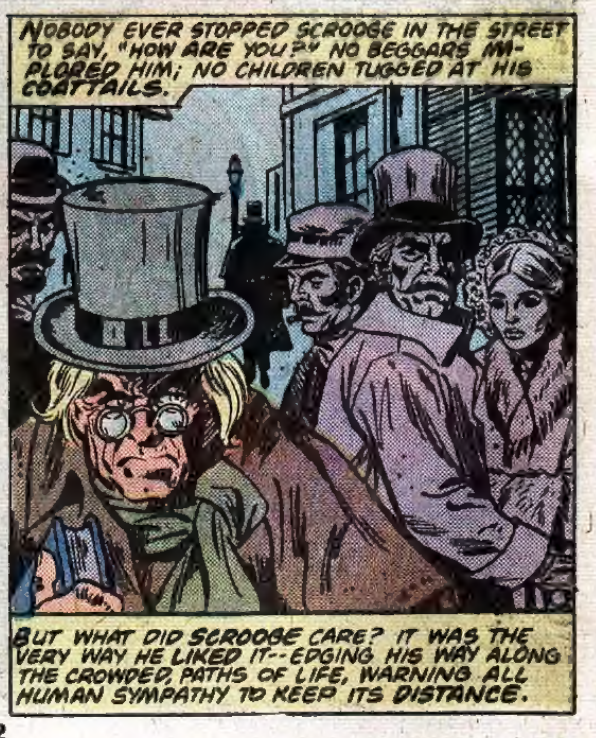
OH, BUT SCROOGE WAS A TIGHTFISTED HAND AT THE GRINDSTONE, A SQUEEZING, WRENCHING, GRASPING, SCRAPING, CLUTCHING--
--COVETOUS OLD SINNER! HARD AND SHARP AS FLINT, FROM WHICH NO STEEL EVER STRUCK A GENEROUS FIRE, NO WINTRY WIND THAT BLEW WAS BITTERER THAN HE!
THEN, HE MET THE SPIRIT.
A Christmas Carol
By Charles Dickens

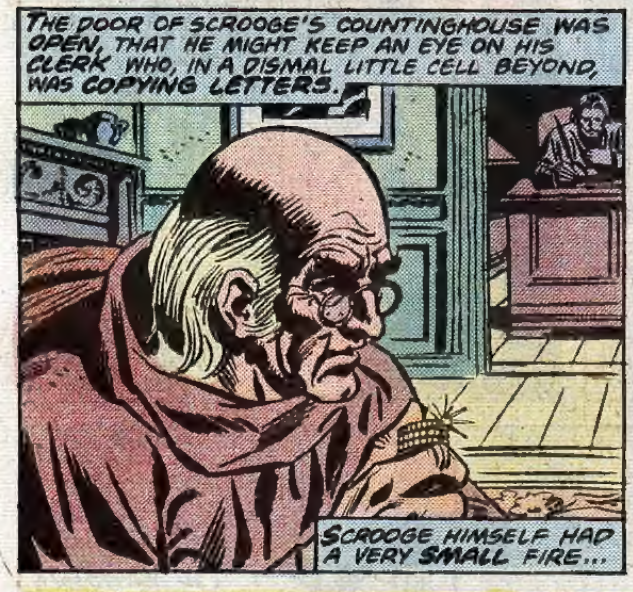

STAVE ONE
MARLEY'S GHOST
MARLEY WAS DEAD. YES, OLD MARLEY WAS AS DEAD AS A DOOR-NAIL--AND EBENEZER SCROOGE KNEW IT.
SCROOGE AND MARLEY WERE PARTNERS FOR WHO KNOWS HOW MANY YEARS. SCROOGE WAS MARLEY'S SOLE EXECUTOR, SOLE ADMINISTRATOR, SOLE FRIEND...AND SOLE MOURNER.

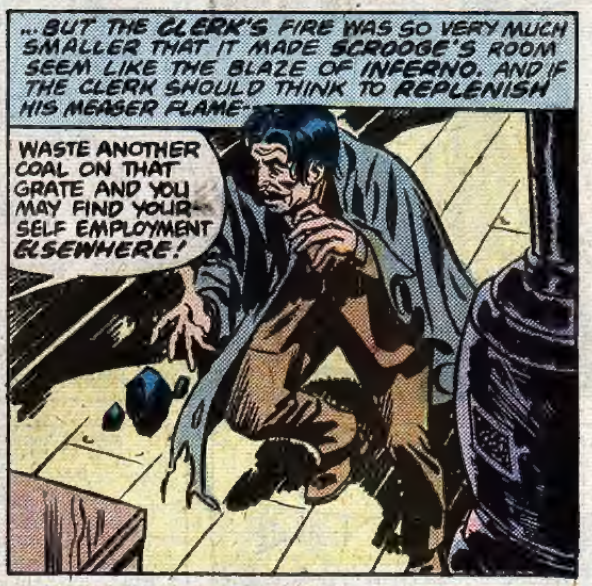
SCROOGE NEVER PAINTED OUT MARLEY'S NAME; IT WOULD HAVE COST TOO MUCH. INDEED, YEARS BEFORE, ON THE VERY DAY OF THE FUNERAL, SCROOGE HAD SOLEMNIZED THE OCCASION BY VOWING TO LEAVE THE NAME WHERE IT WAS.
& MARLEY
SOMETIMES NEW CUSTOMERS CALLED SCROOGE MARLEY. IT WAS ALL THE SAME TO HIM, AND CHEAPER.


NOBODY EVER STOPPED SCROOGE IN THE STREET TO SAY, "HOW ARE YOU?" NO BEGGARS IMPLORED HIM; NO CHILDREN TUGGED AT HIS COATTAILS.
BUT WHAT DID SCROOGE CARE? IT WAS THE VERY WAY HE LIKED IT--EDGING HIS WAY ALONG THE CROWDED PATHS OF LIFE, WARNING ALL HUMAN SYMPATHY TO KEEP ITS DISTANCE.

ONCE UPON A TIME--ON CHRISTMAS EVE--IT WAS COLD, BLEAK, BITING WEATHER, FOGGY WITHAL SO THAT HOUSES LOOKED LIKE MERE PHANTOMS...

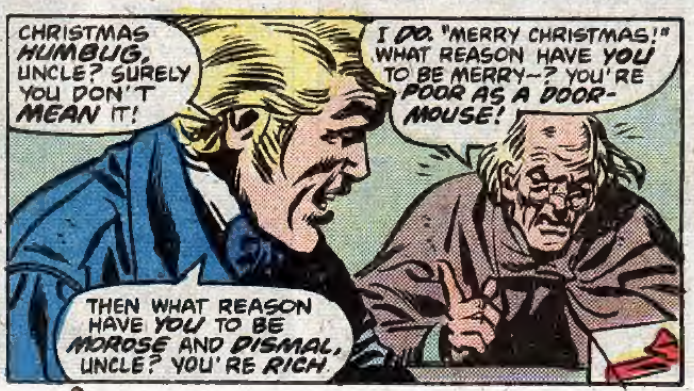
...AND OLD SCROOGE SAT BUSY IN HIS COUNTINGHOUSE.


THE DOOR OF SCROOGE'S COUNTINGHOUSE WAS OPEN, THAT HE MIGHT KEEP AN EYE ON HIS CLERK WHO, IN A DISMAL LITTLE CELL BEYOND, WAS COPYING LETTERS.
SCROOGE HIMSELF HAD A VERY SMALL FIRE...


...BUT THE CLERK'S FIRE WAS SO VERY MUCH SMALLER THAT IT MADE SCROOGE'S ROOM SEEM LIKE THE BLAZE OF INFERNO. AND IF THE CLERK SHOULD THINK TO REPLENISH HIS MEAGER FLAME--
WASTE ANOTHER COAL ON THAT GRATE AND YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF EMPLOYMENT ELSEWHERE!

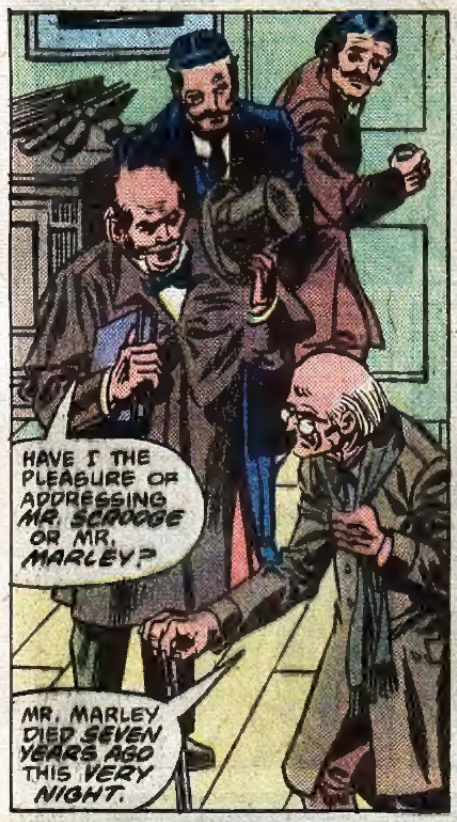
AND SO THE CLERK PUT ON HIS COMFORTER AND TRIED TO WARM HIMSELF BY THE CANDLE--IN WHICH EFFORT, HE FAILED MISERABLY.
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

THE CHEERFUL VOICE BELONGED TO SCROOGE'S NEPHEW, BUT IT WAS HARD TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP...
A MERRY CHRISTMAS, UNCLE! GOD SAVE YOU!
BAH! HUMBUG!


CHRISTMAS HUMBUG, UNCLE? SURELY YOU DON'T MEAN IT!
I DO. "MERRY CHRISTMAS!" WHAT REASON HAVE YOU TO BE MERRY--? YOU'RE POOR AS A DOORMOUSE!
THEN WHAT REASON HAVE YOU TO BE MOROSE AND DISMAL, UNCLE? YOU'RE RICH

WHEN I LIVE IN SUCH A WORLD OF FOOLS, WHAT ELSE CAN I BE BUT CROSS? WHAT'S CHRISTMASTIME BUT A TIME FOR PAYING BILLS WITHOUT MONEY, A TIME FOR FINDING YOURSELF A YEAR OLDER AND NOT AN HOUR RICHER--?
IF I HAD MY WAY, EVERY IDIOT WHO GOES ABOUT WITH "MERRY CHRISTMAS" ON HIS LIPS WOULD BE BOILED IN HIS OWN PUDDING AND BURIED WITH A STAKE OF HOLLY THROUGH HIS HEART! WHAT GOOD HAS CHRISTMAS DONE YOU--?!
UNCLE! THERE ARE MANY THINGS BY WHICH I HAVE DERIVED GOOD BUT BY WHICH I HAVE NOT PROFITED--
--AND CHRISTMAS IS CERTAINLY AMONG THEM.
IT'S A TIME TO THINK OF PEOPLE LESS FORTUNATE AS IF THEY REALLY WERE FELLOW PASSENGERS TO THE GRAVE, AND NOT ANOTHER RACE OF CREATURES BOUND ON OTHER JOURNEYS.
AND THEREFORE, I BELIEVE CHRISTMAS HAS DONE ME GOOD --AND I SAY, GOD BLESS IT!
BRAVO!
KLAP KLAP
LET ME HEAR ANOTHER SOUND FROM YOU OUT THERE, AND YOU'LL CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS BY LOSING YOUR JOB!
AND YOU, NEPHEW, YOU'RE SUCH A POWERFUL SPEAKER IT'S A WONDER YOU DON'T GO INTO PARLIAMENT!
OH, DON'T BE ANGRY, UNCLE-- COME DINE WITH US TOMORROW.
BAH! THE DAY I DINE WITH YOU WILL BE THE DAY WE'RE BOTH ROASTING IN--
BUT WHY, UNCLE? WHY--?!
WHY? WHY DID YOU GET MARRIED?
BECAUSE I FELL IN LOVE.
BECAUSE YOU FELL IN LOVE! THAT'S THE ONE THING EVEN MORE RIDICULOUS THAN A MERRY CHRISTMAS. GOOD AFTERNOON TO YOU!
I AM SORRY, WITH ALL MY HEART, THAT YOU REFUSE TO COME SEE US. SO MERRY CHRISTMAS, UNCLE--AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!
BAH! GOOD AFTERNOON TO YOU!

AND MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU, TOO!
THANK YOU, SIR--MERRY CHRISTMAS!
THERE'S ANOTHER LUNATIC--MY CLERK, EARNING FIFTEEN SHILLINGS A WEEK, WITH A WIFE AND FAMILY, TALKING ABOUT BEING MERRY. HE'LL RETIRE TO BEDLAM.


HAVE I THE PLEASURE OF ADDRESSING MR. SCROOGE OR MR. MARLEY?
MR. MARLEY DIED SEVEN YEARS AGO THIS VERY NIGHT.

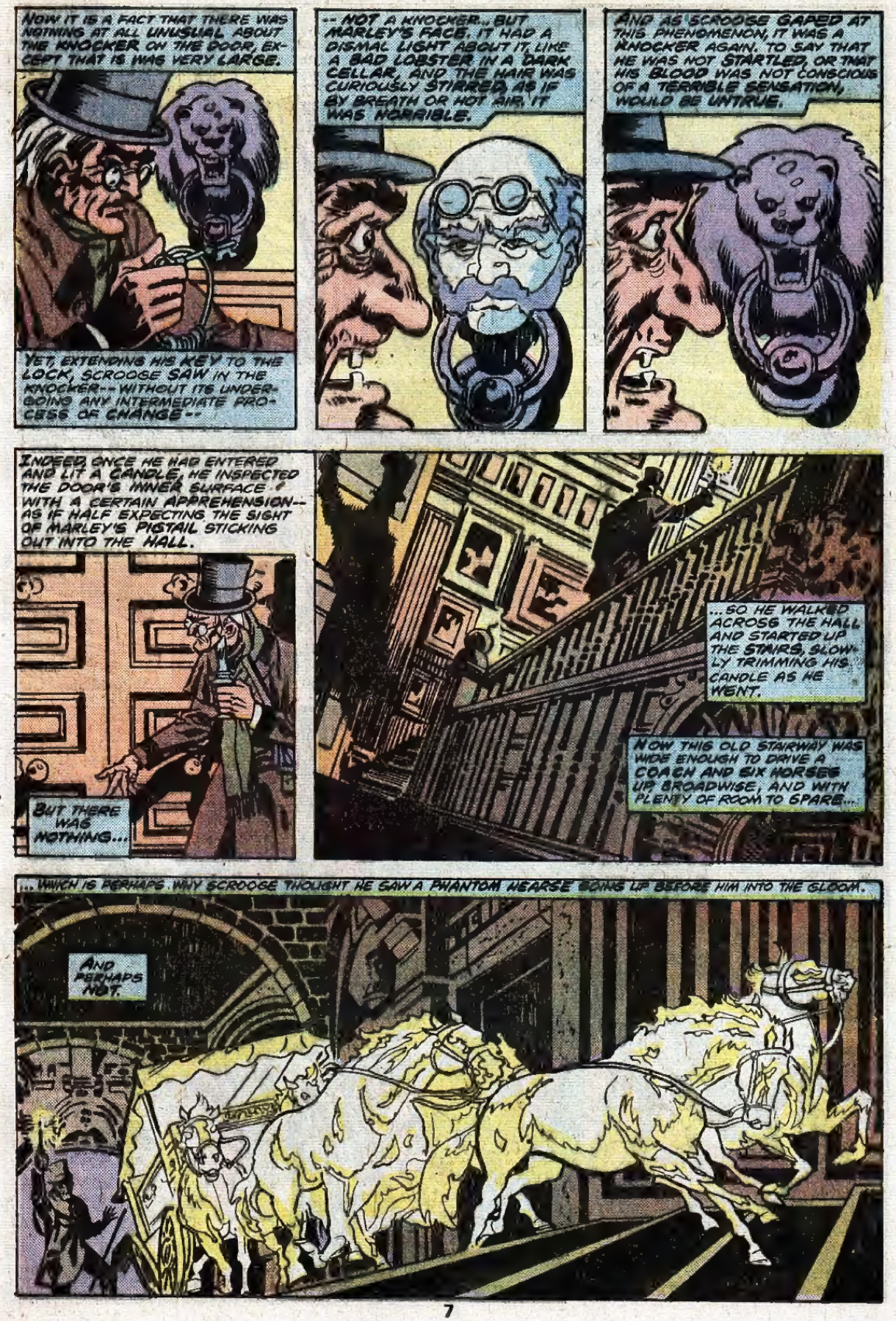
WELL, THEN, WE HAVE NO DOUBT HIS LIBERALITY IS WELL REPRESENTED BY HIS SURVIVING PARTNER.
LIBERALITY...?
YES, MR. SCROOGE, A FEW OF US ARE RAISING FUNDS TO BUY THE POOR SOME FOOD AND DRINK, AND MEANS OF WARMTH...

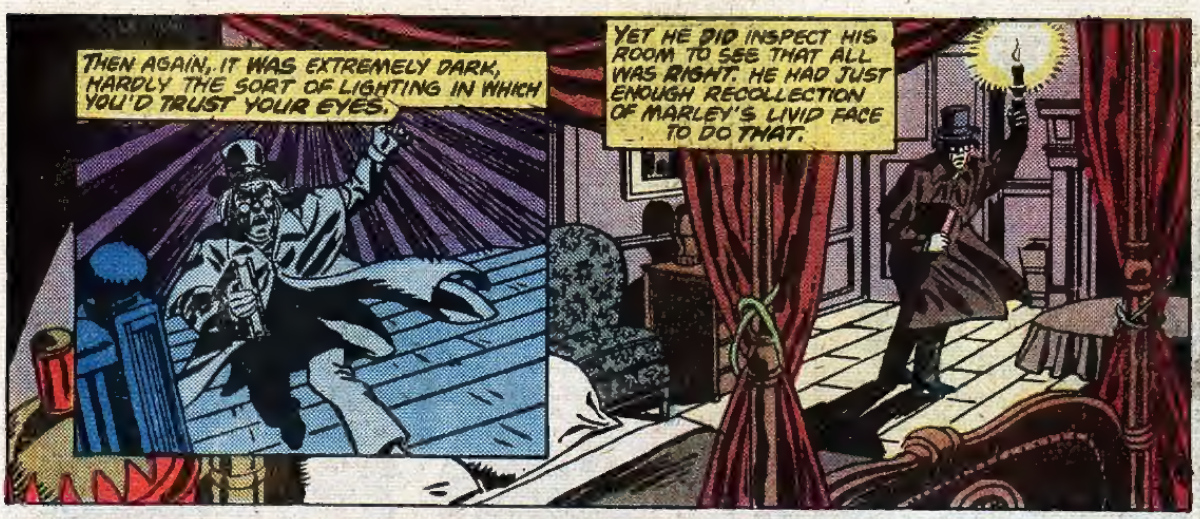
WE CHOOSE THIS TIME BECAUSE IT IS A TIME WHEN WANT IS KEENLY FELT. WHAT SHALL I PUT YOU DOWN FOR?
NOTHING!
OH, YOU WISH TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS?

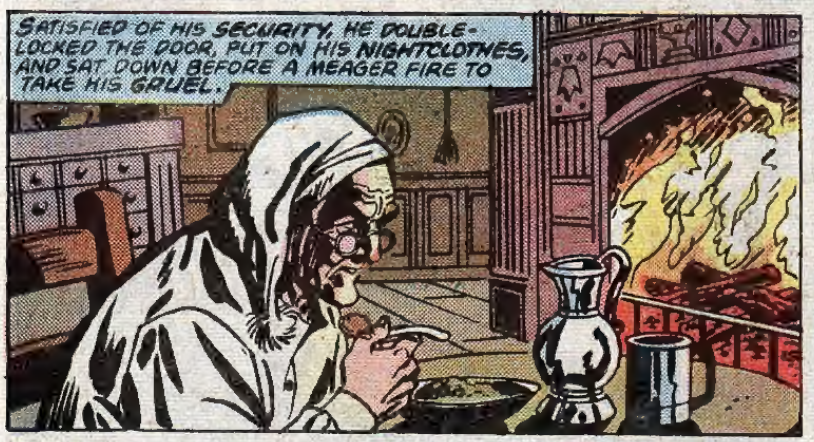
I WISH TO BE LEFT ALONE! THOSE WHO ARE BADLY OFF CAN GO TO PRISON OR WORK IN THE TREADMILL!
BUT...MANY CAN'T GO THERE, AND MANY WOULD RATHER DIE.

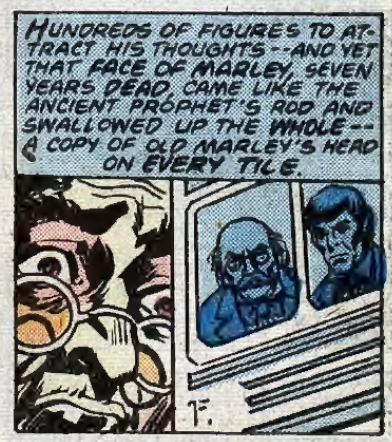
THEN LET THEM--AT LEAST IT'LL DECREASE THE SURPLUS POPULATION! NOW GOOD AFTERNOON TO YOU, GENTLEMEN!

MEANWHILE THE FOG AND DARKNESS THICKENED AND THE COLD GREW SO INTENSE AS TO FREEZE THE BONES.
AS FOR OLD SCROOGE... WELL, AT THE FIRST SOUND OF--
♪ GOD REST YOU, MERRY GENTLEMEN, MAY NOTHING YOU DISMAY -- ♪
--HE SEIZED HIS RULER WITH SUCH FIERCENESS OF INTENT --
...THAT THE POOR CAROLER FLED IN SHEER TERROR.
BAH! CHIRPING FOOL! TIME TO CLOSE. YOU'LL WANT OFF ALL DAY TOMORROW, I SUPPOSE?
IF QUITE CONVENIENT, SIR.
IT'S NOT CONVENIENT--AND IT'S NOT FAIR. IF I WAS TO DOCK YOU HALF A CROWN FOR IT, YOU'D THINK YOURSELF CHEATED --AND YET YOU DON'T THINK I'M CHEATED WHEN I PAY A DAY'S WAGES FOR NO WORK.
IT'S ONLY ONCE A YEAR, SIR.
A POOR EXCUSE FOR PICKING A MAN'S POCKET EVERY TWENTY-FIFTH OF DECEMBER! BUT I SUPPOSE YOU MUST HAVE THE WHOLE DAY. BE HERE ALL THE EARLIER ON THE TWENTY-SIXTH.
SCROOGE TOOK HIS MELANCHOLY DINNER IN HIS USUAL MELANCHOLY TAVERN, NOTING WITH DISPLEASURE THAT IT WAS NOT SO MELANCHOLY THIS NIGHT, AND BEGUILED THE REST OF THE EVENING WITH HIS BANKER'S BOOK...
...WHEREUPON HE WENT HOME TO THE CHAMBERS WHICH HAD ONCE BELONGED TO HIS DECEASED PARTNER. THEY WERE A GLOOMY SUITE OF ROOMS, ALL BUT ONE (IN WHICH SCROOGE HIMSELF RESIDED) RENTED OUT.
THE FOG AND FROST WAS SO THICK ABOUT THE BLACK OLD GATEWAY THAT IT SEEMED AS IF THE DEMON OF THE WEATHER SAT IN MEDITATION ON THE THRESHOLD...


NOW IT IS A FACT THAT THERE WAS NOTHING AT ALL UNUSUAL ABOUT THE KNOCKER ON THE DOOR, EXCEPT THAT IS WAS VERY LARGE.
YET, EXTENDING HIS KEY TO THE LOCK, SCROOGE SAW IN THE KNOCKER--WITHOUT ITS UNDERGOING ANY INTERMEDIATE PROCESS OF CHANGE--
--NOT A KNOCKER... BUT MARLEY'S FACE. IT HAD A DISMAL LIGHT ABOUT IT, LIKE A BAD LOBSTER IN A DARK CELLAR, AND THE HAIR WAS CURIOUSLY STIRRED, AS IF BY BREATH OR HOT AIR. IT WAS HORRIBLE.
AND AS SCROOGE GAPED AT THIS PHENOMENON, IT WAS A KNOCKER AGAIN. TO SAY THAT HE WAS NOT STARTLED, OR THAT HIS BLOOD WAS NOT CONSCIOUS OF A TERRIBLE SENSATION, WOULD BE UNTRUE.
INDEED, ONCE HE HAD ENTERED AND LIT A CANDLE, HE INSPECTED THE DOOR'S INNER SURFACE WITH A CERTAIN APPREHENSION--AS IF HALF EXPECTING THE SIGHT OF MARLEY'S PIGTAIL STICKING OUT INTO THE HALL.
BUT THERE WAS NOTHING...
...SO HE WALKED ACROSS THE HALL AND STARTED UP THE STAIRS, SLOWLY TRIMMING HIS CANDLE AS HE WENT.
NOW THIS OLD STAIRWAY WAS WIDE ENOUGH TO DRIVE A COACH AND SIX HORSES UP BROADWISE, AND WITH PLENTY OF ROOM TO SPARE...
...WHICH IS PERHAPS WHY SCROOGE THOUGHT HE SAW A PHANTOM HEARSE GOING UP BEFORE HIM INTO THE GLOOM.
AND PERHAPS NOT.


THEN AGAIN, IT WAS EXTREMELY DARK, HARDLY THE SORT OF LIGHTING IN WHICH YOU'D TRUST YOUR EYES.
YET HE DID INSPECT HIS ROOM TO SEE THAT ALL WAS RIGHT. HE HAD JUST ENOUGH RECOLLECTION OF MARLEY'S LIVID FACE TO DO THAT.


SATISFIED OF HIS SECURITY, HE DOUBLE-LOCKED THE DOOR, PUT ON HIS NIGHTCLOTHES, AND SAT DOWN BEFORE A MEAGER FIRE TO TAKE HIS GRUEL.

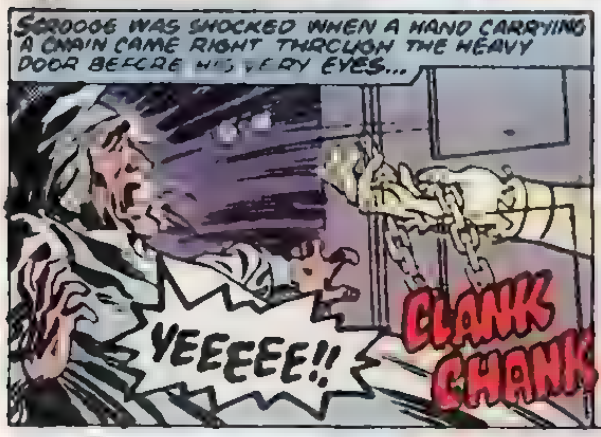

HUNDREDS OF FIGURES TO ATTRACT HIS THOUGHTS--AND YET THAT FACE OF MARLEY, SEVEN YEARS DEAD, CAME LIKE THE ANCIENT PROPHET'S ROD AND SWALLOWED UP THE WHOLE--A COPY OF OLD MARLEY'S HEAD ON EVERY TILE.

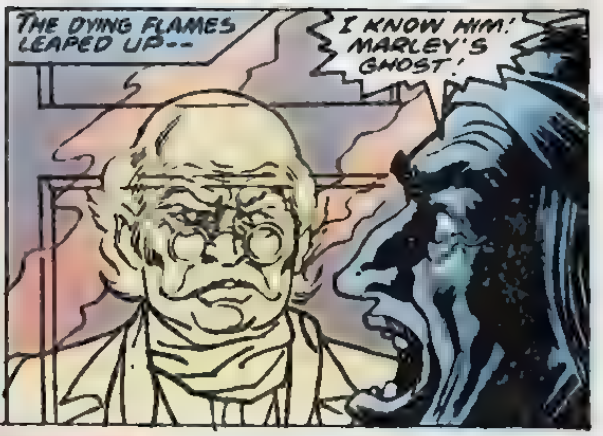
HUMBUG!
THAT'S ALL SCROOGE SAID, AND HE WALKED ACROSS THE ROOM. IT IS NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT HE DID NOT LOOK BACK AT THE TILES.

HIS GLANCE HAPPENED TO REST UPON A DISUSED BELL THAT CONNECTED, FOR SOME PURPOSE NOW FORGOTTEN, WITH A CHAMBER IN THE HIGHEST STORY OF THE BUILDING...

IT WAS WITH GREAT ASTONISHMENT, THEN, AND STRANGE DREAD, THAT HE SAW THIS BELL BEGIN TO SWING.
JANG
JANG
JANG
SOON IT RANG OUT LOUDLY--AND SO DID EVERY BELL IN THE HOUSE.

IT SEEMED LIKE AN HOUR BEFORE THE BELLS FINALLY CEASED THEY WERE SUCCEEDED BY A CLANKING NOISE, DEEP DOWN BELOW, AS IF SOMEONE WERE DRAGGING A HEAVY CHAIN...
CHANK CLINK CHINK
WH-WHAT--?


SCROOGE WAS SHOCKED WHEN A HAND CARRYING A CHAIN CAME RIGHT THROUGH THE HEAVY DOOR BEFORE HIS VERY EYES...
YEEEEE!!
CLANK CHANK


THE DYING FLAMES LEAPED UP--
I KNOW HIM! MARLEY'S GHOST!

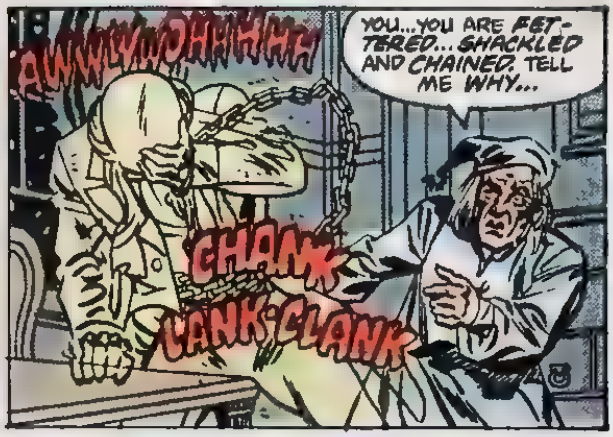
YES! THE SAME FACE, THE VERY SAME--MARLEY! HIS BODY WAS TRANSPARENT, SO THAT SCROOGE COULD SEE THE TWO BUTTONS ON THE BACK OF HIS WAISTCOAT.

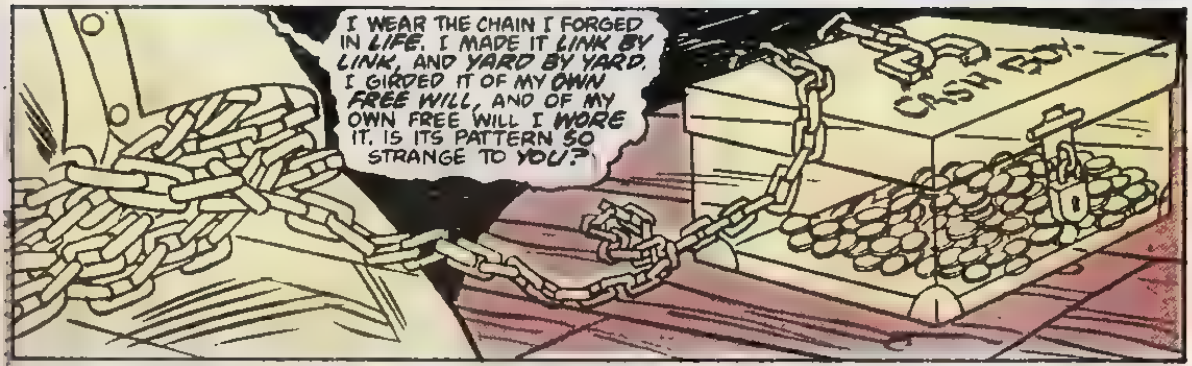
NO, NOR DID HE BELIEVE IT EVEN NOW--THOUGH HE FELT THE CHILLING INFLUENCE OF THE PHANTOM'S DEATH COLD EYES...
HOW NOW! WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME? AND WHO ARE YOU--IF ANYONE?
I WANT MUCH. AND ASK ME WHO I WAS.

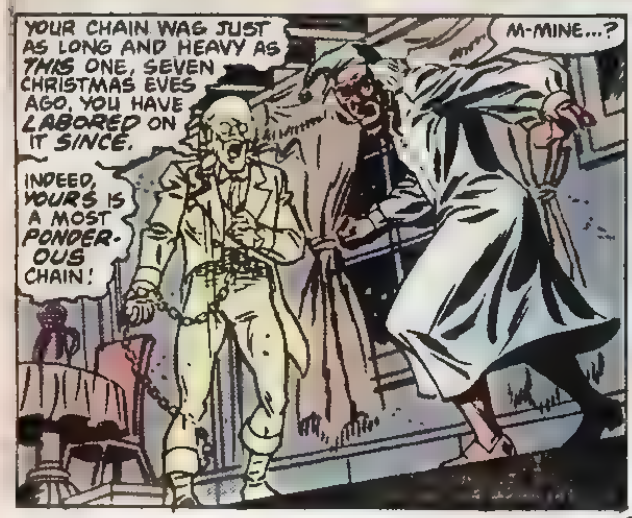
YOU'RE MIGHTY PARTICULAR FOR A SHADE. ALL RIGHT -- WHO WERE YOU?
IN LIFE I WAS YOUR PARTNER, JACOB MARLEY. BUT YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN ME. WHY DO YOU DOUBT YOUR OWN SENSES?
BECAUSE A SLIGHT DIS-ORDER OF THE STOMACH MAKES THEM UNRELIABLE. YOU MAY BE AN UNDIGESTED BIT OF BEEF, A BLOT OF MUSTARD, A CRUMB OF CHEESE -- A FRAGMENT OF AN UNDERDONE POTATO.
THERE'S MORE OF THE GRAVY THAN THE GRAVE ABOUT YOU -- WHATEVER YOU ARE!
DESPITE SCROOGE'S ATTEMPT TO BE MAGGISH, THE TRUTH IS HE WAS MERELY TRYING TO KEEP DOWN HIS TERROR, FOR THE SPECTER'S VOICE DISTURBED THE VERY MARROW OF HIS BONES.
--AND ALLOWED HIS LOWER JAW TO DROP DOWN UPON HIS BREAST!
MAN OF THE WORLDLY MIND, DO YOU BELIEVE IN ME OR NOT?
I DO -- I MUST!
YOU SEE THIS TOOTHPICK --? I HAVE BUT TO SWALLOW THIS, AND BE FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS PERSECUTED BY A LEGION OF GOBLINS, ALL MY OWN CREATION. HUMBUG, I TELL YOU -- HUMBUG!
AT THIS THE SPIRIT RAISED A FRIGHTFUL CRY, AND SHOOK HIS CHAIN WITH SUCH A DISMAL AND APPALLING NOISE THAT SCROOGE NEARLY SWOONED...
AWWOHHH...
CLANK
CHANK
BUT EVEN GREATER WAS HIS FRIGHT WHEN THE PHANTOM UNWRAPPED THE BANDAGE AROUND HIS NECK --

BUT WHY DO SPIRITS WALK THE EARTH-- AND WHY DO THEY COME TO ME?
IT IS REQUIRED OF EVERY MAN THAT THE SPIRIT WITHIN HIM SHOULD WALK ABROAD AMONG HIS FELLOW MEN. IF THAT SPIRIT GOES NOT FORTH IN LIFE, THEN IT IS CONDEMNED TO DO SO AFTER DEATH...

IT IS DOOMED TO WANDER THROUGH THE WORLD-- OH, WOE IS ME!-- AND WITNESS WHAT IT CANNOT SHARE, BUT MIGHT HAVE SHARED ON EARTH, AND MIGHT HAVE TURNED TO HAPPINESS!

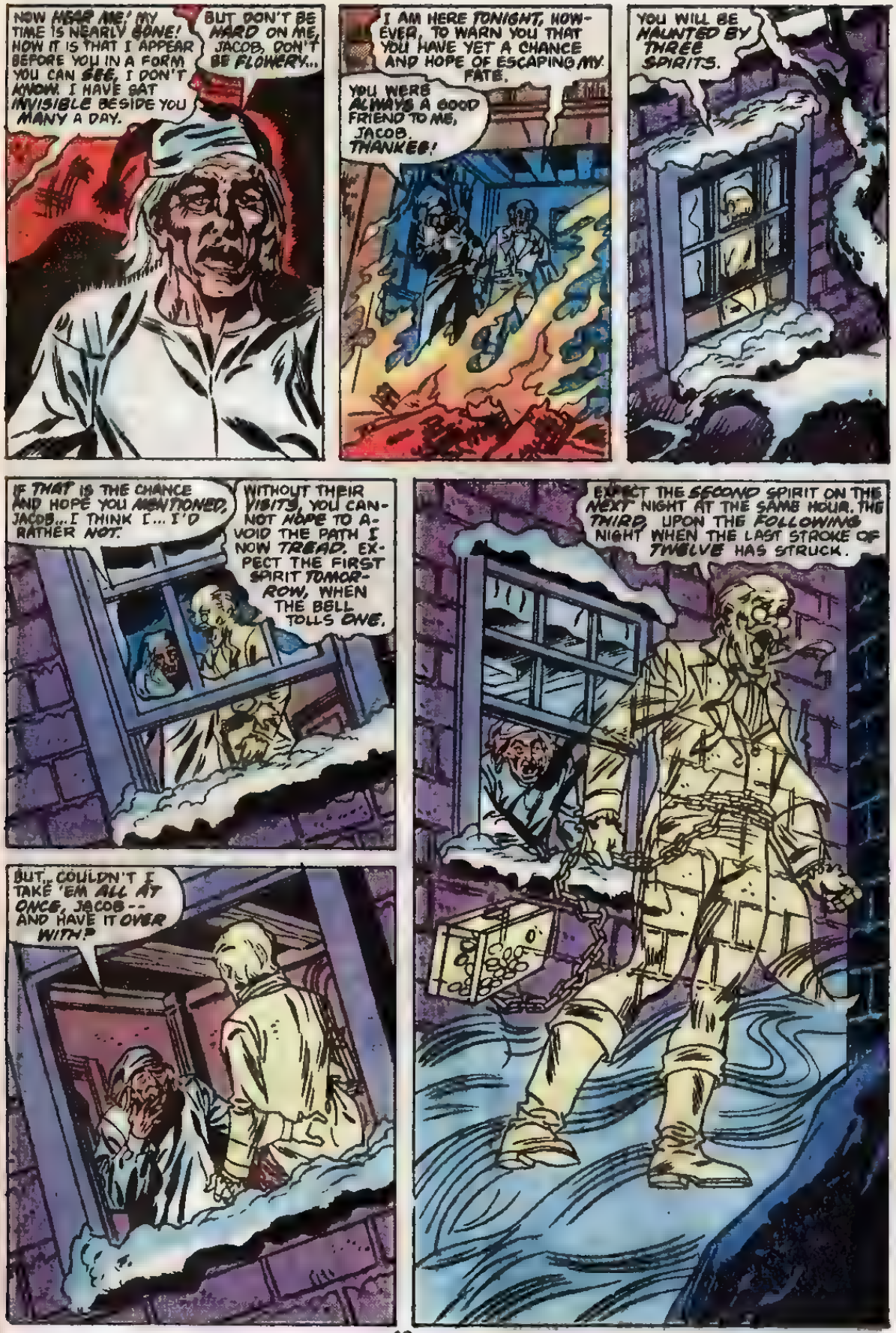

AWWWOHHHH
YOU...YOU ARE FETTERED... SHACKLED AND CHAINED. TELL ME WHY...
CHANK
CLANK CLANK

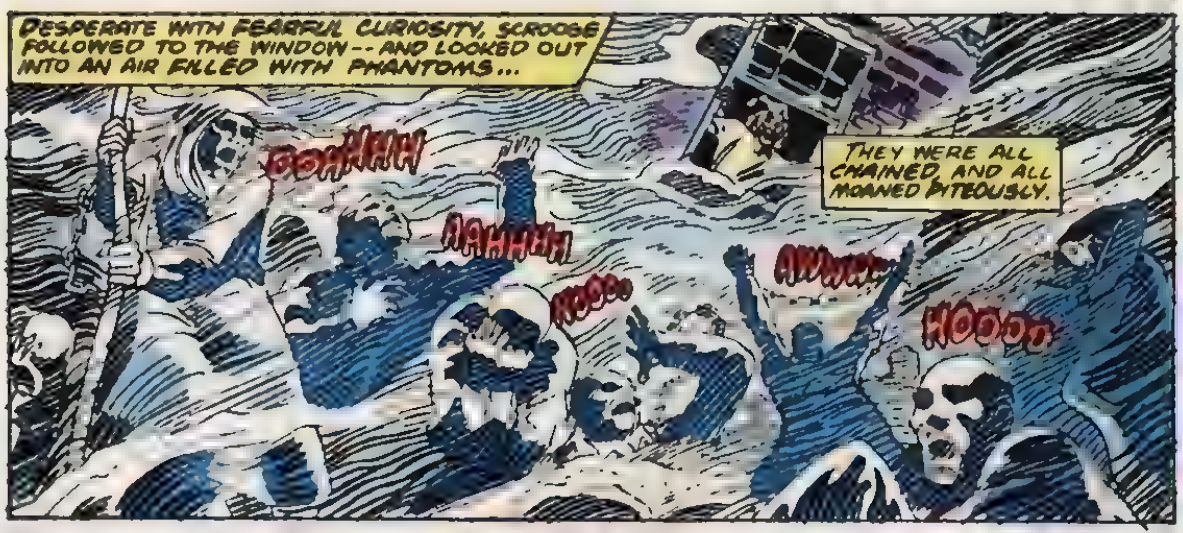

I WEAR THE CHAIN I FORGED IN LIFE. I MADE IT LINK BY LINK, AND YARD BY YARD. I GIRDED IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL, AND OF MY OWN FREE WILL I WORE IT. IS ITS PATTERN SO STRANGE TO YOU?

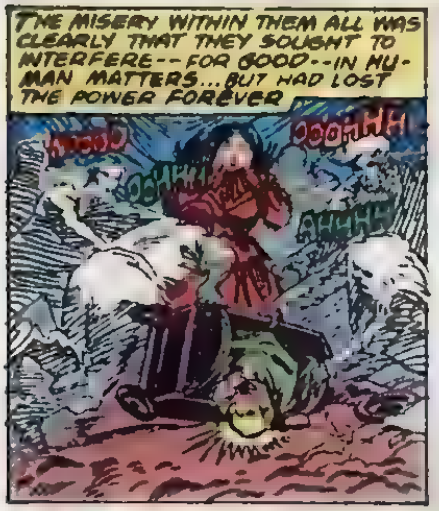

YOUR CHAIN WAS JUST AS LONG AND HEAVY AS THIS ONE, SEVEN CHRISTMAS EVES AGO. YOU HAVE LABORED ON IT SINCE.
M-MINE...?
INDEED, YOURS IS A MOST PONDEROUS CHAIN!

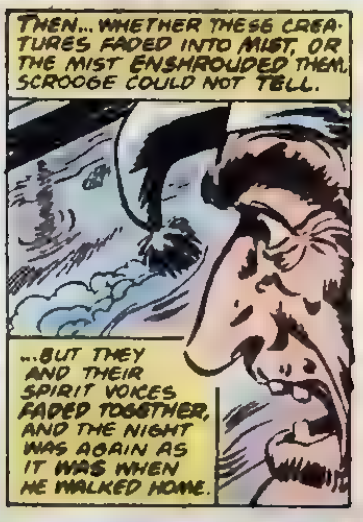
JACOB! OLD JACOB MARLEY, TELL ME MORE! SPEAK TO COMFORT ME, JACOB!
COMFORT IS NO LONGER MINE TO GIVE. I CANNOT REST, I CANNOT STAY. I CANNOT LINGER ANYWHERE.

IN LIFE, MY SPIRIT NEVER ROVED BEYOND THE NARROW LIMITS OF OUR MONEY-MAKING MOLE... AND THUS, NEARY JOURNEYS NOW LIE BEFORE ME!
APPARENTLY, YOU'VE BEEN VERY SLOW ABOUT IT, JACOB, SEVEN YEARS DEAD--AND TRAVELING ALL THE TIME?
SLOW--?! THE WHOLE TIME--NO REST, NO PEACE--INCESSANT TORTURE OF REMORSE--ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND!
OH! TO BE A CAPTIVE, BOUND AND DOUBLE-IRONED--NOT TO KNOW THAT AGES OF INCESSANT LABOR, PERFORMED BY IMMORTAL CREATURES FOR THIS EARTH, MUST PASS INTO ETERNITY BEFORE ITS GOOD IS DEVELOPED!
NOT TO KNOW THAT ANY CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, WORKING KINDLY IN ITS LITTLE SPHERE--
--WILL FIND ITS MORTAL LIFE TOO SHORT FOR ITS VAST MEANS OF USEFULNESS! NOT TO KNOW THAT NO AMOUNT OF REGRET CAN MAKE AMENDS FOR LIFE'S OPPORTUNITIES MISUSED!
YET SUCH WAS I! OH! SUCH WAS I!
BUT... BUT YOU WERE ALWAYS A GOOD MAN OF BUSINESS, JACOB...
BUSINESS! MANKIND WAS MY BUSINESS! THE COMMON WELFARE WAS MY BUSINESS! CHARITY, MERCY, AND BENEVOLENCE WERE ALL MY BUSINESS! AND I NEGLECTED THAT BUSINESS SHAMEFULLY!
AT THIS TIME OF THE ROLLING YEAR I SUFFER MOST. WHY DID I WALK THROUGH CROWDS OF FELLOW BEINGS WITH MY EYES TURNED DOWN--NEVER RAISING THEM TO THAT BLESSED STAR WHICH LED THE WISE MEN TO A POOR ABODE?
WERE THERE NO POOR HOMES TO WHICH ITS LIGHT WOULD HAVE CONDUCTED ME?

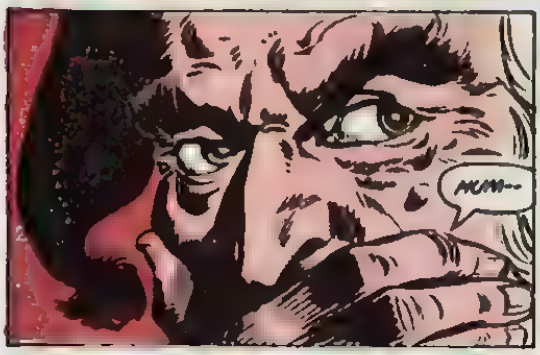

NOW HEAR ME! MY TIME IS NEARLY GONE! HOW IT IS THAT I APPEAR BEFORE YOU IN A FORM YOU CAN SEE, I DON'T KNOW. I HAVE SAT INVISIBLE BESIDE YOU MANY A DAY.
BUT DON'T BE HARD ON ME, JACOB, DON'T BE FLOWERY...
I AM HERE TONIGHT, HOWEVER, TO WARN YOU THAT YOU HAVE YET A CHANCE AND HOPE OF ESCAPING MY FATE.
YOU WERE ALWAYS A GOOD FRIEND TO ME, JACOB. THANKEE!
YOU WILL BE HAUNTED BY THREE SPIRITS.
IF THAT IS THE CHANCE AND HOPE YOU MENTIONED, JACOB... I THINK I... I'D RATHER NOT.
WITHOUT THEIR VISITS, YOU CANNOT HOPE TO AVOID THE PATH I NOW TREAD. EXPECT THE FIRST SPIRIT TOMORROW, WHEN THE BELL TOLLS ONE.
EXPECT THE SECOND SPIRIT ON THE NEXT NIGHT AT THE SAME HOUR. THE THIRD, UPON THE FOLLOWING NIGHT WHEN THE LAST STROKE OF TWELVE HAS STRUCK.
BUT, COULDN'T I TAKE 'EM ALL AT ONCE, JACOB -- AND HAVE IT OVER WITH?

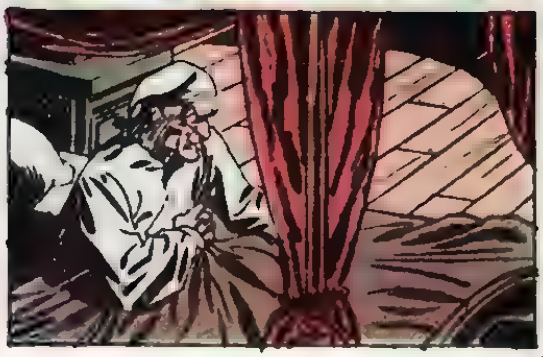

DESPERATE WITH FEARFUL CURIOSITY, SCROOGE FOLLOWED TO THE WINDOW -- AND LOOKED OUT INTO AN AIR FILLED WITH PHANTOMS...
OOHHHH
NAHHHH
THEY WERE ALL CHAINED AND ALL MOANED PITEOUSLY.
HOOOO


THE MISERY WITHIN THEM ALL WAS CLEARLY THAT THEY SOUGHT TO INTERFERE -- FOR GOOD -- IN HUMAN MATTERS... BUT HAD LOST THE POWER FOREVER
OOOHHH
AHHHH

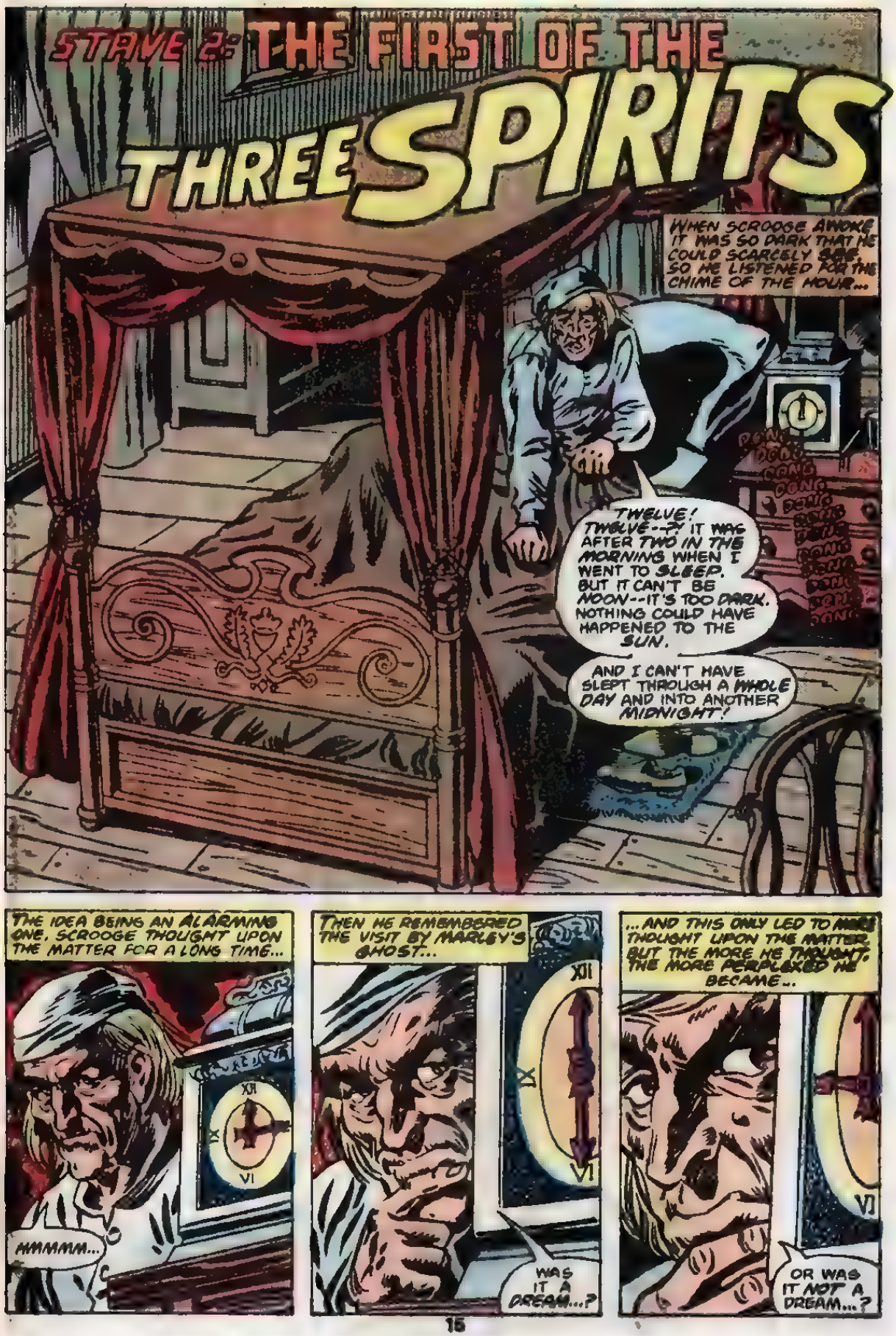

THEN... WHETHER THESE CREATURES FADED INTO MIST, OR THE MIST ENSHROUDED THEM, SCROOGE COULD NOT TELL.
...BUT THEY AND THEIR SPIRIT VOICES FADED TOGETHER, AND THE NIGHT WAS AGAIN AS IT WAS WHEN HE WALKED HOME.

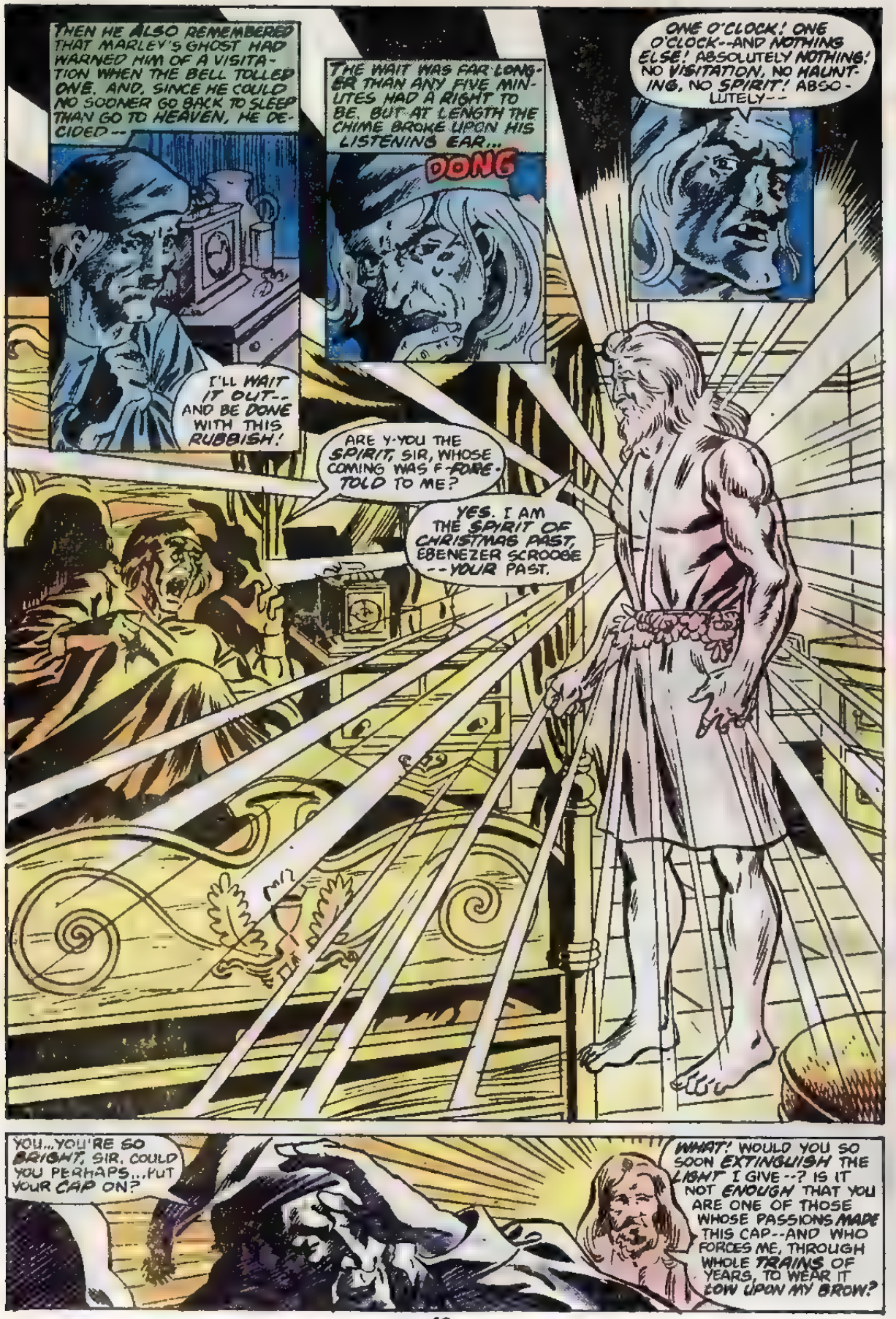
AND SCROOGE, FEELING THE FATIGUES OF THE DAY, BEGAN TO DISBELIEVE AGAIN...

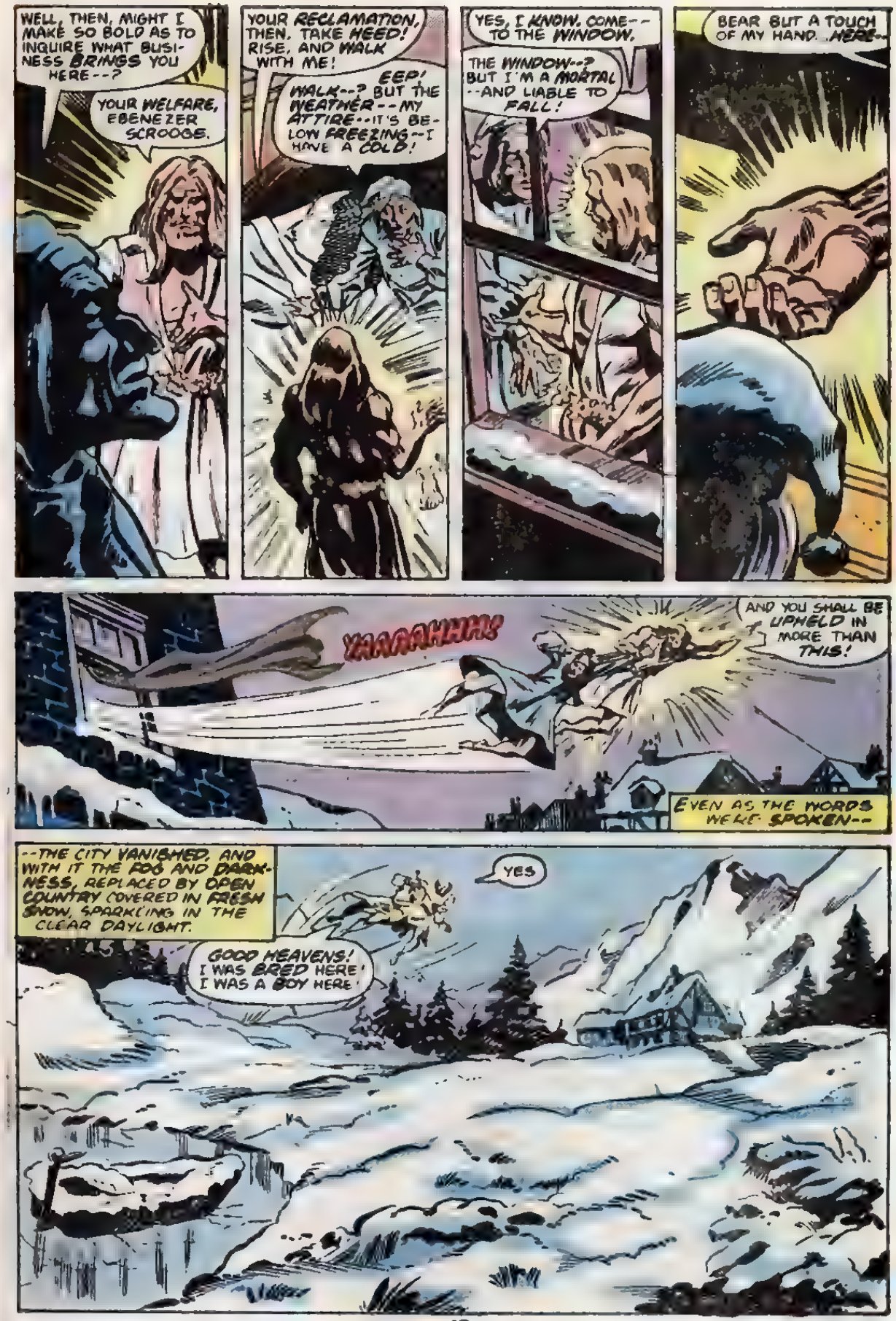

HUM--

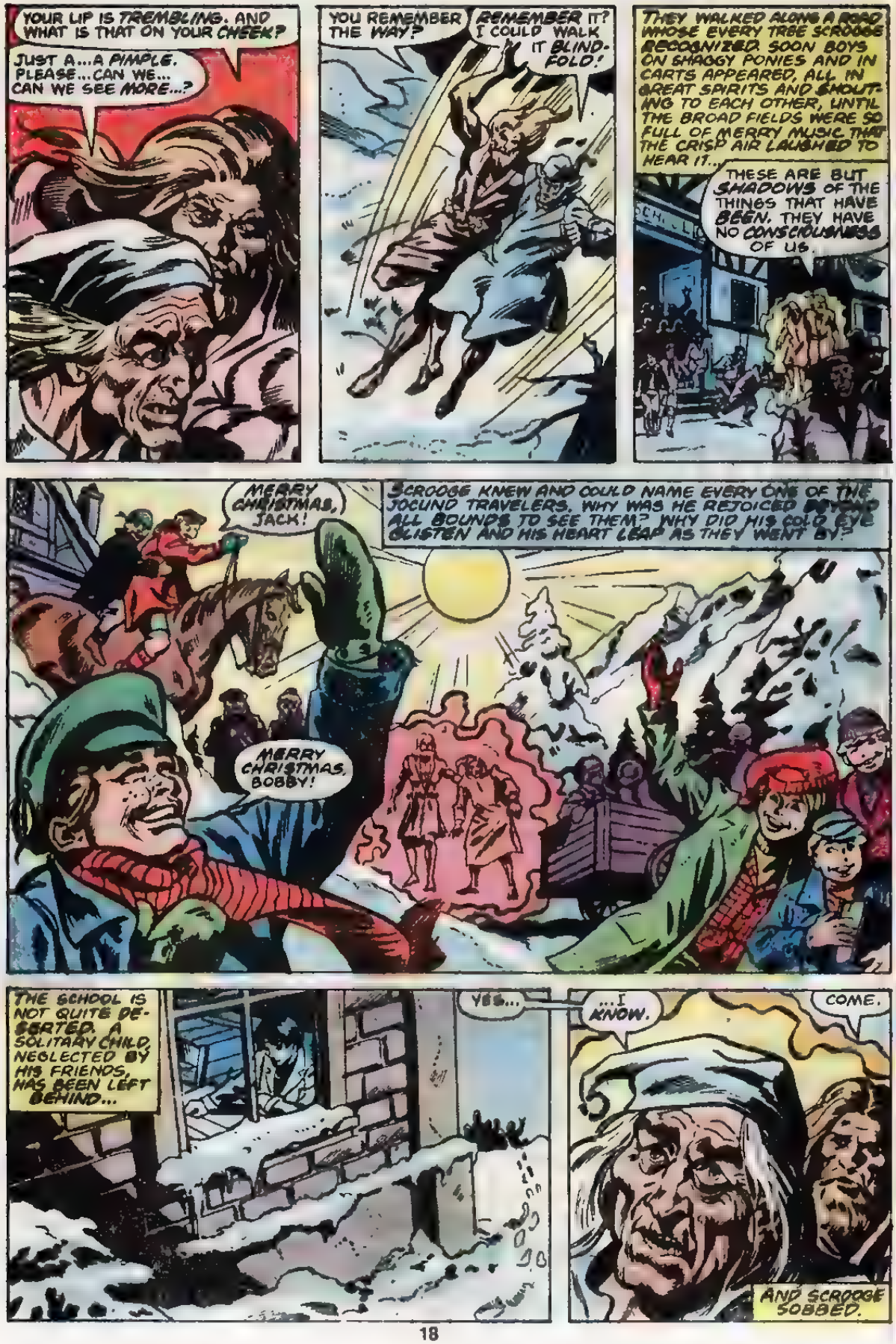


--BUG?
...AT LEAST FOR A MOMENT.


STAVE 2: THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS
WHEN SCROOGE AWOKE IT WAS SO DARK THAT HE COULD SCARCELY SEE: SO HE LISTENED FOR THE CHIME OF THE HOUR...
DONG DONG DONG DONG
TWELVE! TWELVE--? IT WAS AFTER TWO IN THE MORNING WHEN I WENT TO SLEEP. BUT IT CAN'T BE NOON--IT'S TOO DARK. NOTHING COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THE SUN.
AND I CAN'T HAVE SLEPT THROUGH A WHOLE DAY AND INTO ANOTHER MIDNIGHT!
THE IDEA BEING AN ALARMING ONE, SCROOGE THOUGHT UPON THE MATTER FOR A LONG TIME...
XII
VI
MMMMM...
THEN HE REMEMBERED THE VISIT BY MARLEY'S GHOST...
XII
VI
WAS IT A DREAM...?
...AND THIS ONLY LED TO MORE THOUGHT UPON THE MATTER. BUT THE MORE HE THOUGHT, THE MORE PERPLEXED HE BECAME...
VI
OR WAS IT NOT A DREAM...?


THEN HE ALSO REMEMBERED THAT MARLEY'S GHOST HAD WARNED HIM OF A VISITATION WHEN THE BELL TOLLED ONE. AND, SINCE HE COULD NO SOONER GO BACK TO SLEEP THAN GO TO HEAVEN, HE DECIDED --
I'LL WAIT IT OUT-- AND BE DONE WITH THIS RUBBISH!
THE WAIT WAS FAR LONGER THAN ANY FIVE MINUTES HAD A RIGHT TO BE. BUT AT LENGTH THE CHIME BROKE UPON HIS LISTENING EAR...
DONG
ONE O'CLOCK! ONE O'CLOCK--AND NOTHING ELSE! ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! NO VISITATION, NO HAUNTING, NO SPIRIT! ABSOLUTELY--
ARE Y-YOU THE SPIRIT, SIR, WHOSE COMING WAS F-FORETOLD TO ME?
YES. I AM THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST, EBENEZER SCROOGE --YOUR PAST.
YOU...YOU'RE SO BRIGHT, SIR, COULD YOU PERHAPS...PUT YOUR CAP ON?
WHAT! WOULD YOU SO SOON EXTINGUISH THE LIGHT I GIVE --? IS IT NOT ENOUGH THAT YOU ARE ONE OF THOSE WHOSE PASSIONS MADE THIS CAP--AND WHO FORCES ME, THROUGH WHOLE TRAINS OF YEARS, TO WEAR IT LOW UPON MY BROW?


WELL, THEN, MIGHT I MAKE SO BOLD AS TO INQUIRE WHAT BUSINESS BRINGS YOU HERE--?
YOUR WELFARE, EBENEZER SCROOGE.
YOUR RECLAMATION, THEN. TAKE HEED! RISE, AND WALK WITH ME!
EEP! WALK--? BUT THE WEATHER--MY ATTIRE--IT'S BELOW FREEZING--I HAVE A COLD!
YES, I KNOW. COME--TO THE WINDOW.
THE WINDOW--? BUT I'M A MORTAL --AND LIABLE TO FALL!
BEAR BUT A TOUCH OF MY HAND. HERE--
YAAAAHHH!!!
AND YOU SHALL BE UPHELD IN MORE THAN THIS!
EVEN AS THE WORDS WERE SPOKEN--
--THE CITY VANISHED, AND WITH IT THE FOG AND DARKNESS, REPLACED BY OPEN COUNTRY COVERED IN FRESH SNOW, SPARKLING IN THE CLEAR DAYLIGHT.
YES
GOOD HEAVENS! I WAS BRED HERE! I WAS A BOY HERE!

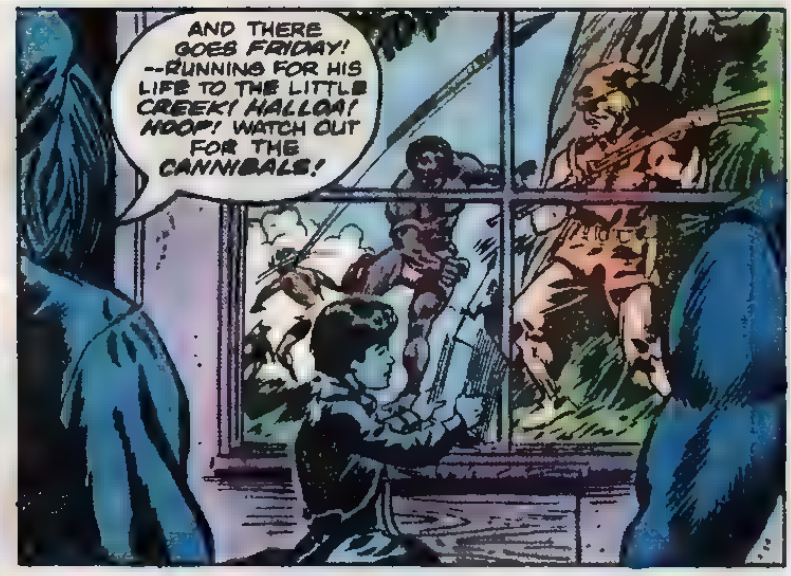

YOUR LIP IS TREMBLING. AND WHAT IS THAT ON YOUR CHEEK?
JUST A...A PIMPLE. PLEASE...CAN WE... CAN WE SEE MORE...?
YOU REMEMBER THE WAY?
REMEMBER IT? I COULD WALK IT BLINDFOLD!
THEY WALKED ALONG A ROAD WHOSE EVERY TREE SCROOGE RECOGNIZED. SOON BOYS ON SHAGGY PONIES AND IN CARTS APPEARED, ALL IN GREAT SPIRITS AND SHOUTING TO EACH OTHER, UNTIL THE BROAD FIELDS WERE SO FULL OF MERRY MUSIC THAT THE CRISP AIR LAUGHED TO HEAR IT...
THESE ARE BUT SHADOWS OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN. THEY HAVE NO CONSCIOUSNESS OF US.
MERRY CHRISTMAS, JACK!
SCROOGE KNEW AND COULD NAME EVERY ONE OF THE JOCUND TRAVELERS. WHY WAS HE REJOICED BEYOND ALL BOUNDS TO SEE THEM? WHY DID HIS COLD EYE GLISTEN AND HIS HEART LEAP AS THEY WENT BY?
MERRY CHRISTMAS, BOBBY!
THE SCHOOL IS NOT QUITE DESERTED. A SOLITARY CHILD, NEGLECTED BY HIS FRIENDS, HAS BEEN LEFT BEHIND...
YES...
...I KNOW.
COME.
AND SCROOGE SOBBED.

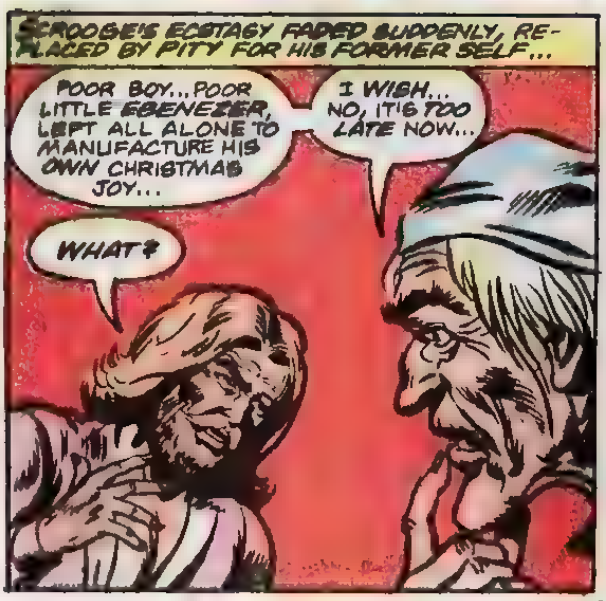
THEY WALKED THROUGH THE WALL OF THIS BUILDING MADE OF MEMORIES--SO MANY LONG-AGO MEMORIES...
...AND IN ONE OF THE LONG, BARE, MELANCHOLY SCHOOLROOMS--FILLED WITH SO MANY MORE BITTERSWEET MEMORIES--THEY FOUND A SINGLE LONELY BOY READING NEAR A FEEBLE FIRE.
AND SCROOGE COULD NO LONGER CONTROL HIMSELF. HE WEPT, WEPT AS HE NEVER HAD BEFORE...
...WEPT AT THE SIGHT OF HIS POOR FORGOTTEN SELF, AS HE ONCE WAS, SO VERY LONG AGO.
1001 Arabian Nights
LOOK AGAIN UPON YOUR YOUNGER SELF, EBENEZER SCROOGE, AND SEE WHAT WONDERS HIS MIND HAS WROUGHT--EVEN IN THE DEPTHS OF HIS LONELINESS.
WHY, IT'S ALI BABA--DEAR OLD HONEST ALI BABA! YES--ONE CHRISTMAS-TIME, WHEN I WAS LEFT HERE ALL ALONE, ALI BABA DID COME--JUST LIKE THAT!

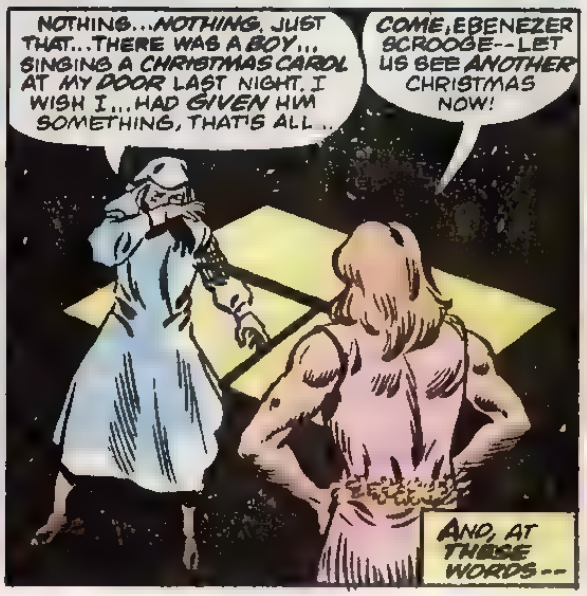
AND THERE'S ALADDIN --WITH HIS LAMP-- AND THE GENIE--THE WONDERFUL, WONDERFULL GENIE!

AND LOOK! THERE'S THE PARROT-- GREEN BODY AND YELLOW TAIL-- THERE HE IS! "POOR ROBINSON CRUSOE," HE CALLED HIM-- WHEN HE CAME HOME AGAIN, AFTER SAILING ROUND THE ISLAND!

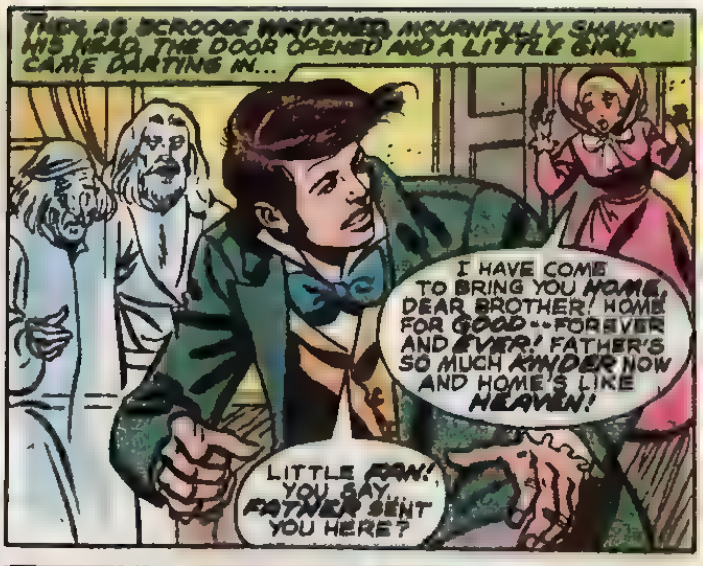
"POOR ROBINSON CRUSOE, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, ROBIN CRUSOE?" THE MEN THOUGHT HE WAS DREAMING, BUT HE WASN'T! IT WAS THE PARROT, YOU SEE!

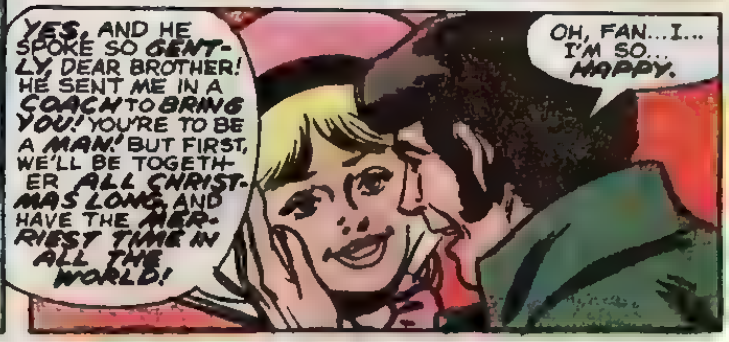

AND THERE GOES FRIDAY! --RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE TO THE LITTLE CREEK! HALLOA! HOOP! WATCH OUT FOR THE CANNIBALS!

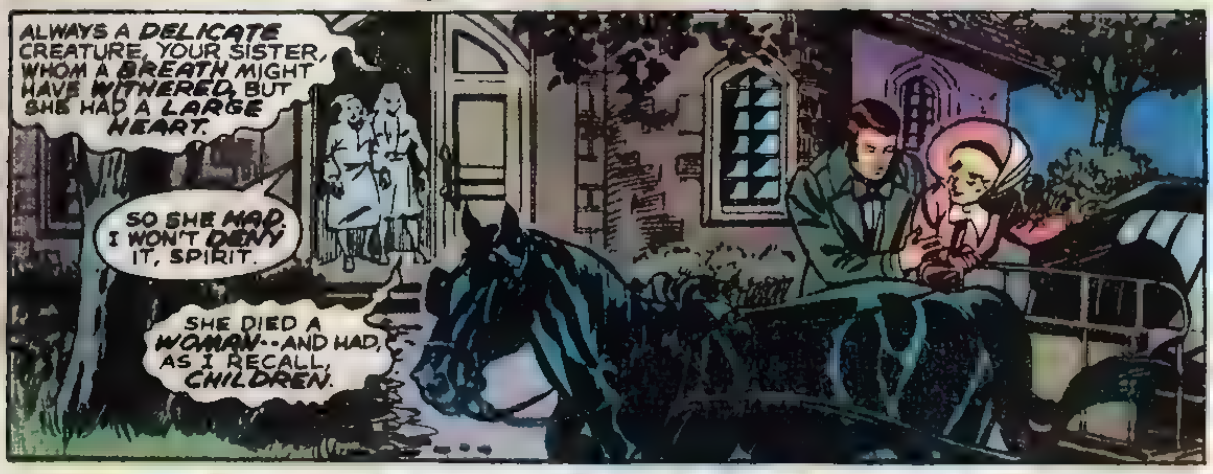

SCROOGE'S ECSTASY FADED SUDDENLY, REPLACED BY PITY FOR HIS FORMER SELF...
POOR BOY... POOR LITTLE EBENEZER, LEFT ALL ALONE TO MANUFACTURE HIS OWN CHRISTMAS JOY...
I WISH... NO, IT'S TOO LATE NOW...
WHAT?

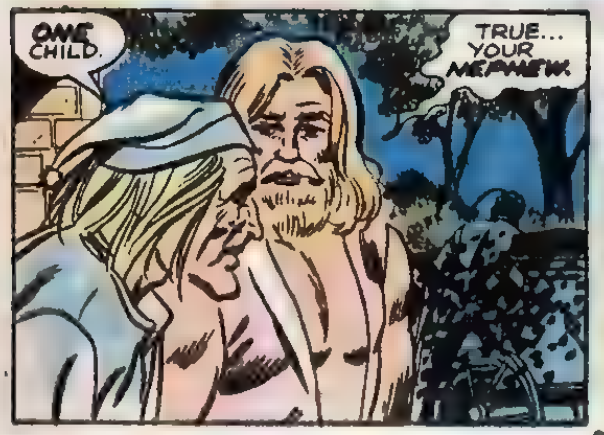

NOTHING... NOTHING, JUST THAT... THERE WAS A BOY... SINGING A CHRISTMAS CAROL AT MY DOOR LAST NIGHT. I WISH I... HAD GIVEN HIM SOMETHING, THAT'S ALL...
COME, EBENEZER SCROOGE-- LET US SEE ANOTHER CHRISTMAS NOW!
AND, AT THESE WORDS--

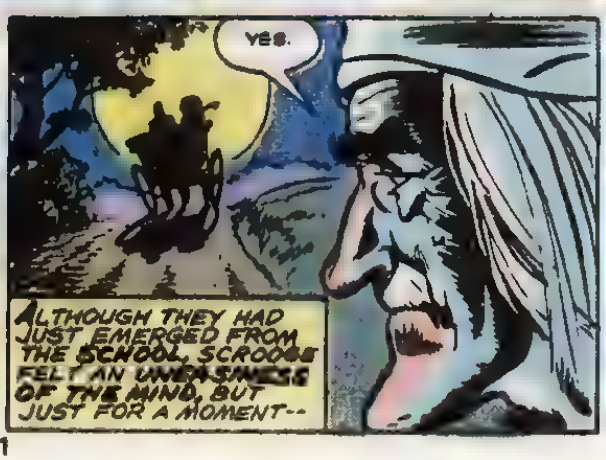
--SCROOGE'S FORMER SELF GREW LARGER AND THE SCHOOLROOM BECAME A LITTLE DARKER AND MORE DIRTY.
HE WAS NO LONGER READING, BUT STANDING IN AN ATTITUDE OF ABJECT DESPAIR.

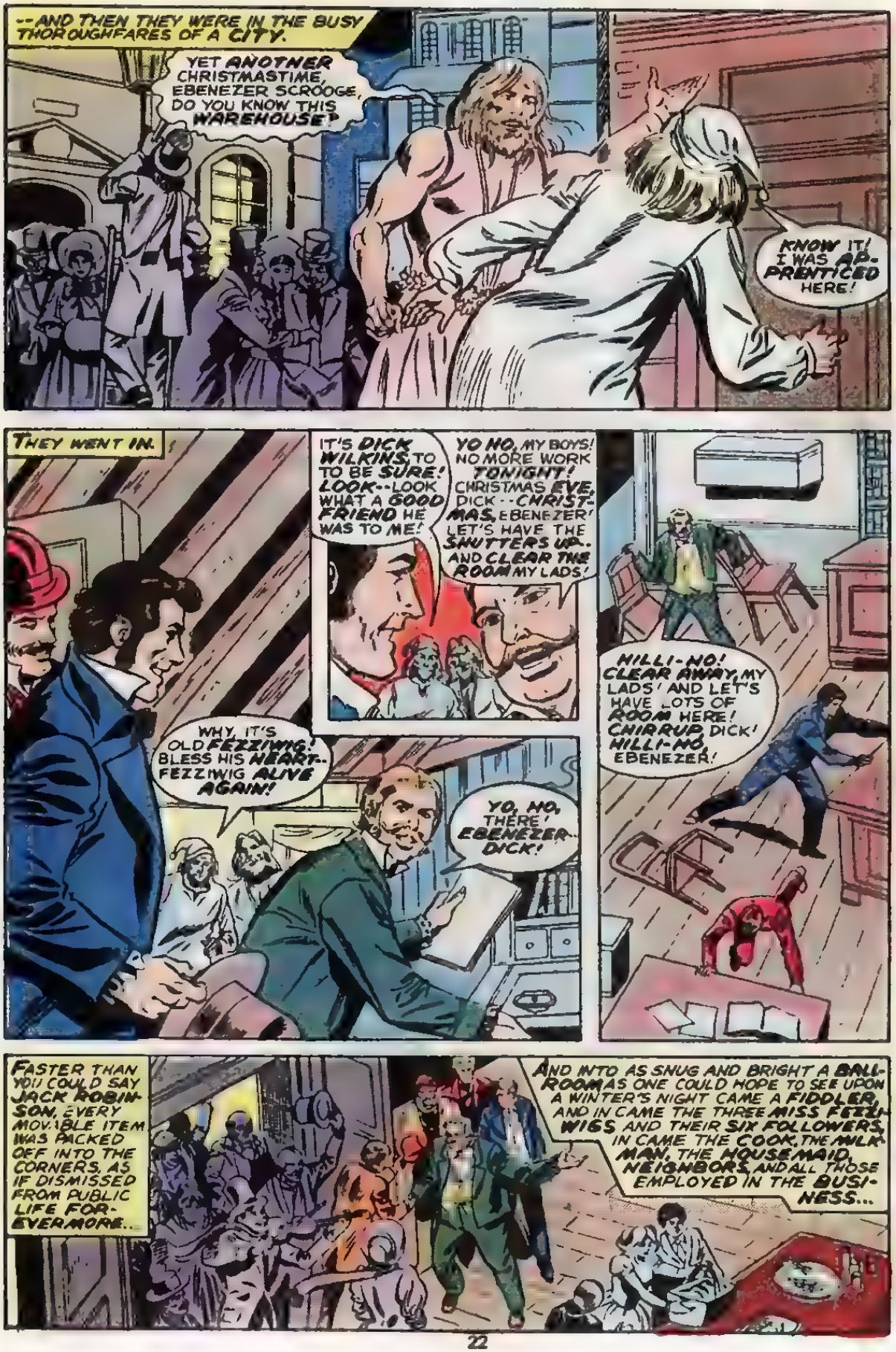

THEN, AS SCROOGE WATCHED, MOURNFULLY SHAKING HIS HEAD, THE DOOR OPENED AND A LITTLE GIRL CAME DARTING IN...
I HAVE COME TO BRING YOU HOME, DEAR BROTHER! HOME FOR GOOD--FOREVER AND EVER! FATHER'S SO MUCH KINDER NOW AND HOME'S LIKE HEAVEN!
LITTLE FAN! YOU SAY FATHER SENT YOU HERE?


YES, AND HE SPOKE SO GENTLY, DEAR BROTHER! HE SENT ME IN A COACH TO BRING YOU! YOU'RE TO BE A MAN! BUT FIRST, WE'LL BE TOGETHER ALL CHRISTMAS LONG AND HAVE THE MERRIEST TIME IN ALL THE WORLD!
OH, FAN...I... I'M SO... HAPPY.

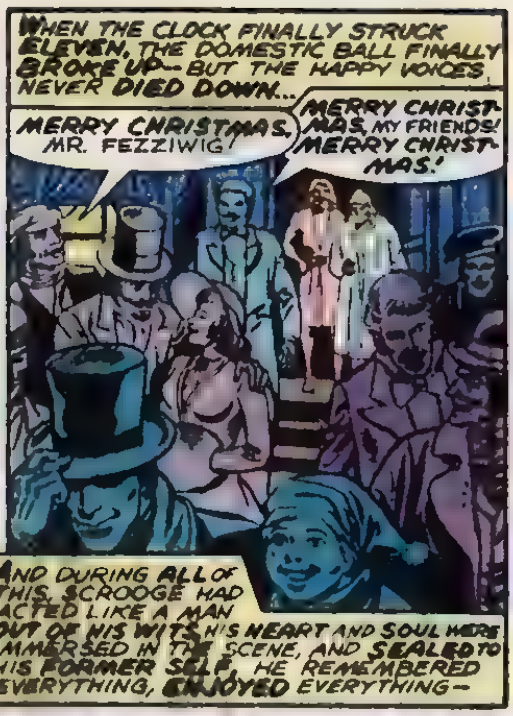

ALWAYS A DELICATE CREATURE, YOUR SISTER, WHOM A BREATH MIGHT HAVE WITHERED, BUT SHE HAD A LARGE HEART.
SO SHE HAD. I WON'T DENY IT, SPIRIT.
SHE DIED A WOMAN--AND HAD, AS I RECALL, CHILDREN.

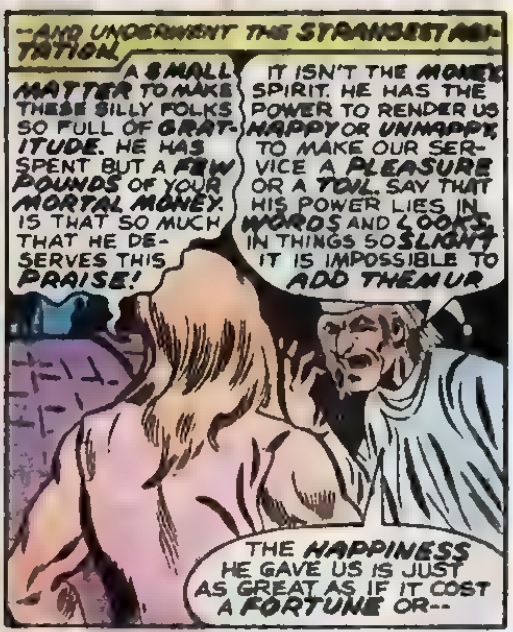

ONE CHILD.
TRUE... YOUR NEPHEW.

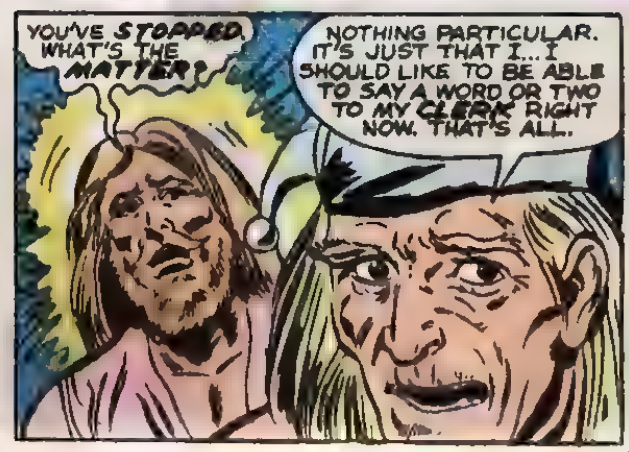

YES.
ALTHOUGH THEY HAD JUST EMERGED FROM THE SCHOOL, SCROOGE FELT AN UNEASINESS OF THE MIND, BUT JUST FOR A MOMENT--

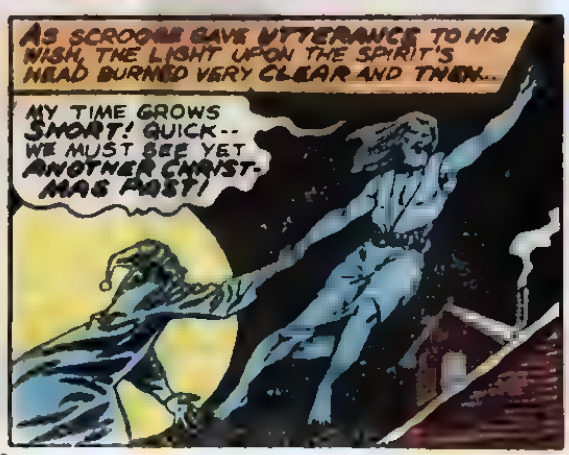

--AND THEN THEY WERE IN THE BUSY THOROUGHFARES OF A CITY.
YET ANOTHER CHRISTMASTIME, EBENEZER SCROOGE, DO YOU KNOW THIS WAREHOUSE?
KNOW IT! I WAS APPRENTICED HERE!
THEY WENT IN.
IT'S DICK WILKINS, TO TO BE SURE! LOOK--LOOK WHAT A GOOD FRIEND HE WAS TO ME!
YO HO, MY BOYS! NO MORE WORK TONIGHT! CHRISTMAS EVE, DICK--CHRISTMAS, EBENEZER! LET'S HAVE THE SHUTTERS UP.. AND CLEAR THE ROOM MY LADS!
HILLI-HO! CLEAR AWAY, MY LADS! AND LET'S HAVE LOTS OF ROOM HERE! CHIRRUP DICK! HILLI-HO EBENEZER!
WHY, IT'S OLD FEZZIWIG! BLESS HIS HEART.. FEZZIWIG ALIVE AGAIN!
YO, HO, THERE! EBENEZER-DICK!
FASTER THAN YOU COULD SAY JACK ROBINSON, EVERY MOVABLE ITEM WAS PACKED OFF INTO THE CORNERS, AS IF DISMISSED FROM PUBLIC LIFE FOREVERMORE..
AND INTO AS SNUG AND BRIGHT A BALLROOM AS ONE COULD HOPE TO SEE UPON A WINTER'S NIGHT CAME A FIDDLER, AND IN CAME THE THREE MISS FEZZIWIGS AND THEIR SIX FOLLOWERS, IN CAME THE COOK, THE MILKMAN, THE HOUSEMAID, NEIGHBORS, AND ALL THOSE EMPLOYED IN THE BUSINESS...

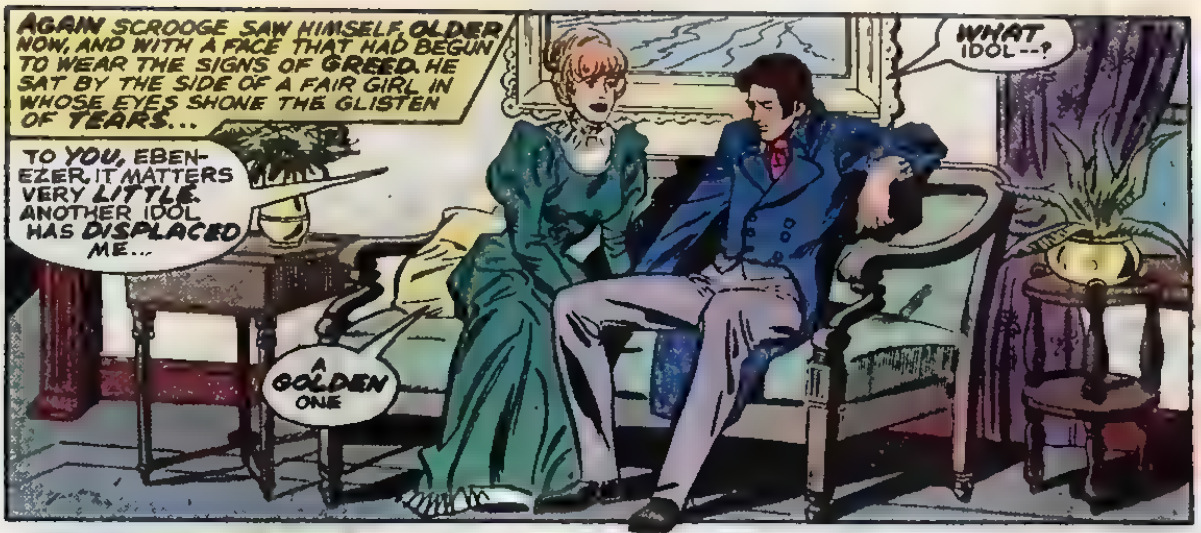
THERE WERE DANCES AND THERE WERE MORE DANCES, AND THROUGH THE LONG HAPPY NIGHT THERE WERE CAKES, AND THERE WAS A GREAT PIECE OF COLD ROAST, AND THERE WERE MINCE PIES AND PLENTY OF BEER. BUT THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE EVENING WAS OLD FEZZIWIG HIMSELF, EVER AT THE CENTER OF THE FESTIVITY.
COME ON AND DANCE MY FRIENDS! CUT AND BOW, WHIRL AND SPIN! HILLI-HO--AND WELL DONE!

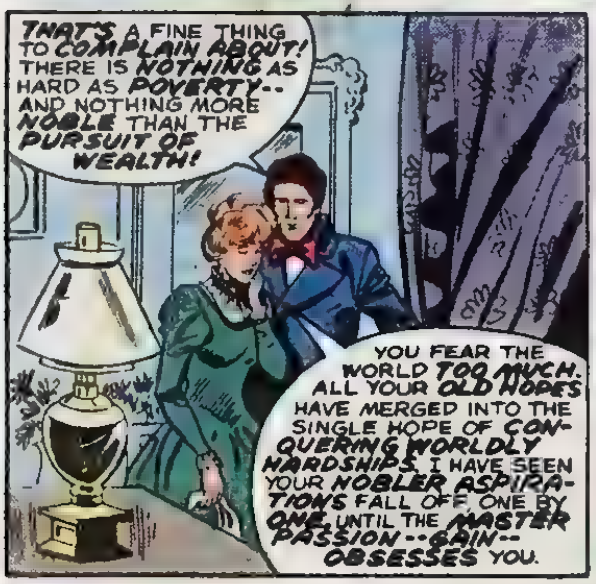

WHEN THE CLOCK FINALLY STRUCK ELEVEN, THE DOMESTIC BALL FINALLY BROKE UP--BUT THE HAPPY VOICES NEVER DIED DOWN...
MERRY CHRISTMAS, MR. FEZZIWIG!
MERRY CHRISTMAS, MY FRIENDS! MERRY CHRISTMAS!
AND DURING ALL OF THIS, SCROOGE HAD ACTED LIKE A MAN OUT OF HIS WITS. HIS HEART AND SOUL WERE IMMERSED IN THE SCENE, AND SEALED TO HIS FORMER SELF. HE REMEMBERED EVERYTHING, ENJOYED EVERYTHING--


--AND UNDERWENT THE STRANGEST AGITATION.
A SMALL MATTER TO MAKE THESE SILLY FOLKS SO FULL OF GRATITUDE. HE HAS SPENT BUT A FEW POUNDS OF YOUR MORTAL MONEY. IS THAT SO MUCH THAT HE DESERVES THIS PRAISE!
IT ISN'T THE MONEY, SPIRIT. HE HAS THE POWER TO RENDER US HAPPY OR UNHAPPY, TO MAKE OUR SERVICE A PLEASURE OR A TOIL. SAY THAT HIS POWER LIES IN WORDS AND LOOKS, IN THINGS SO SLIGHT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ADD THEM UP.
THE HAPPINESS HE GAVE US IS JUST AS GREAT AS IF IT COST A FORTUNE OR--


YOU'VE STOPPED, WHAT'S THE MATTER?
NOTHING PARTICULAR. IT'S JUST THAT I... I SHOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SAY A WORD OR TWO TO MY CLERK RIGHT NOW. THAT'S ALL..

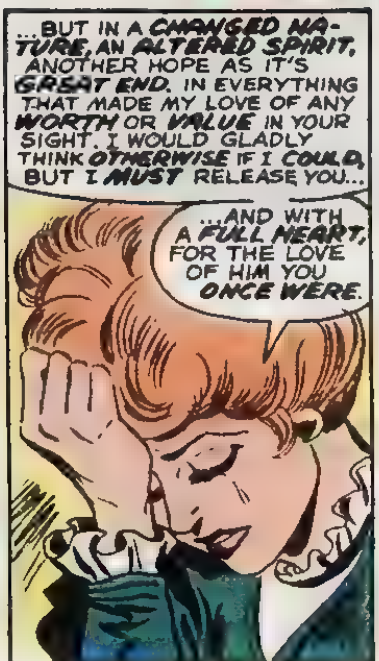

AS SCROOGE GAVE UTTERANCE TO HIS WISH, THE LIGHT UPON THE SPIRIT'S HEAD BURNED VERY CLEAR AND THEN...
MY TIME GROWS SHORT! QUICK--WE MUST SEE YET ANOTHER CHRISTMAS PAST!

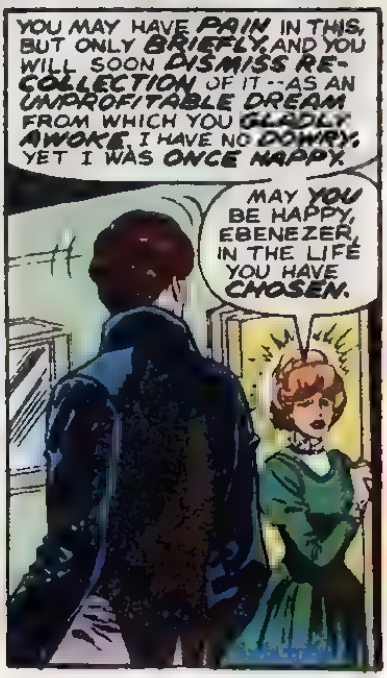

AGAIN SCROOGE SAW HIMSELF, OLDER NOW, AND WITH A FACE THAT HAD BEGUN TO WEAR THE SIGNS OF GREED. HE SAT BY THE SIDE OF A FAIR GIRL IN WHOSE EYES SHONE THE GLISTEN OF TEARS...
TO YOU, EBENEZER, IT MATTERS VERY LITTLE. ANOTHER IDOL HAS DISPLACED ME...
A GOLDEN ONE
WHAT, IDOL--?


THAT'S A FINE THING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT! THERE IS NOTHING AS HARD AS POVERTY--AND NOTHING MORE NOBLE THAN THE PURSUIT OF WEALTH!
YOU FEAR THE WORLD TOO MUCH. ALL YOUR OLD HOPES HAVE MERGED INTO THE SINGLE HOPE OF CONQUERING WORLDLY HARDSHIPS. I HAVE SEEN YOUR NOBLER ASPIRATIONS FALL OFF, ONE BY ONE, UNTIL THE MASTER PASSION--GAIN--OBSESSES YOU.

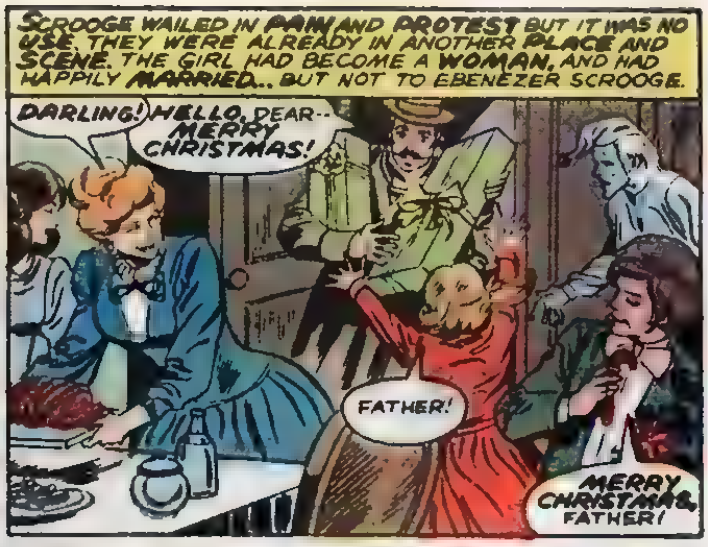
WHAT OF IT? EVEN IF I HAVE GROWN WISER, MY FEELINGS TOWARD YOU HAVE NOT CHANGED
OUR AGREEMENT IS AN OLD ONE, MADE WHEN WE WERE BOTH POOR AND CONTENT TO BE. SO UNTIL WE COULD IMPROVE OUR WORLDLY FORTUNE THROUGH PATIENT WORK. WHEN IT WAS MADE, YOU WERE A DIFFERENT MAN. YOU HAVE CHANGED.
I WAS A BOY.

YOU WERE NOT WHAT YOU ARE NOW. I STILL AM. THAT WHICH PROMISED HAPPINESS WHEN WE WERE ONE IN HEART IS FRAUGHT WITH MISERY NOW THAT WE ARE TWO. I MUST RELEASE YOU.
HAVE I EVER SOUGHT RELEASE?
NOT IN WORDS...


...BUT IN A CHANGED NATURE, AN ALTERED SPIRIT, ANOTHER HOPE AS IT'S GREAT END. IN EVERYTHING THAT MADE MY LOVE OF ANY WORTH OR VALUE IN YOUR SIGHT, I WOULD GLADLY THINK OTHERWISE IF I COULD, BUT I MUST RELEASE YOU...
...AND WITH A FULL HEART, FOR THE LOVE OF HIM YOU ONCE WERE.


YOU MAY HAVE PAIN IN THIS, BUT ONLY BRIEFLY, AND YOU WILL SOON DISMISS RECOLLECTION OF IT--AS AN UNPROFITABLE DREAM FROM WHICH YOU GLADLY AWOKE. I HAVE NO DOWRY. YET I WAS ONCE HAPPY.
MAY YOU BE HAPPY, EBENEZER, IN THE LIFE YOU HAVE CHOSEN.

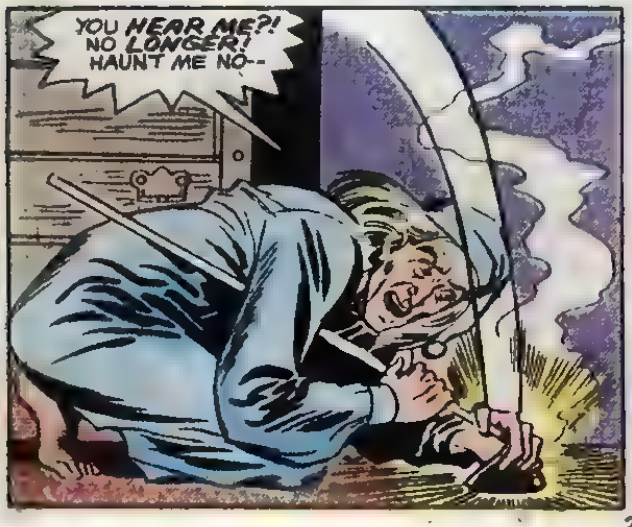
SHE LEFT HIM, AND THEY PARTED FOREVER...
SPIRIT! SHOW ME NO MORE! WHY DO YOU DELIGHT IN TORTURING ME?! NO MORE!
YES! ONE SHADOW MORE-ONE CHRISTMAS MORE!


SCROOGE WAILED IN PAIN AND PROTEST BUT IT WAS NO USE. THEY WERE ALREADY IN ANOTHER PLACE AND SCENE. THE GIRL HAD BECOME A WOMAN, AND HAD HAPPILY MARRIED... BUT NOT TO EBENEZER SCROOGE.
DARLING! HELLO, DEAR-- MERRY CHRISTMAS!
FATHER!
MERRY CHRISTMAS, FATHER!

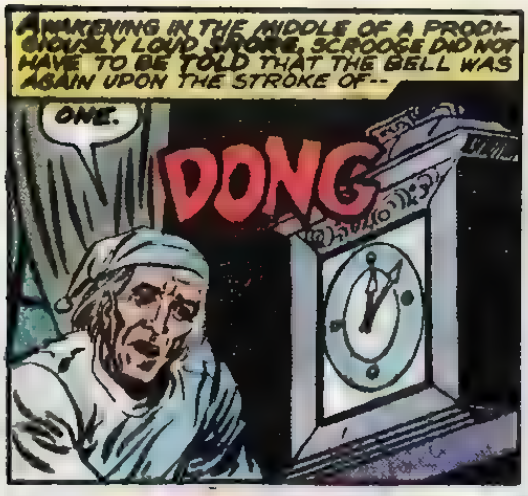
DARLING I SAW AN OLD FRIEND OF YOURS THIS AFTERNOON-- EBENEZER SCROOGE. I PASSED HIS OFFICE WINDOW, AND HE HAD A CANDLE INSIDE--I COULDN'T HELP SEEING HIM HIS PARTNER LIES ON THE POINT OF DEATH AND THERE HE SAT, QUITE ALONE IN THE WORLD, I DO BELIEVE.
POOR MAN.. POOR EBENEZER SCROOGE...

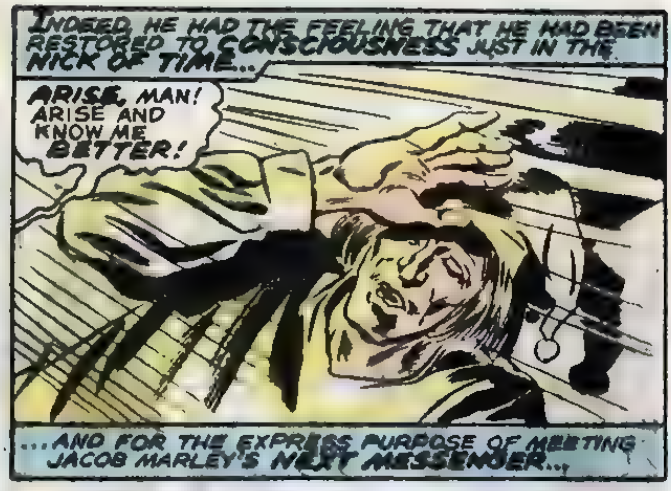
SPIRIT! REMOVE ME FROM THIS PLACE-- I CANNOT BEAR IT!
WHY? I TOLD YOU THESE WERE ONLY SHADOWS OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN IT IS MERELY A SCENE YOU MIGHT HAVE HAD IF YOU--

NO!! LEAVE ME! TAKE ME BACK! HAUNT ME NO LONGER!


YOU HEAR ME?! NO LONGER! HAUNT ME NO--

--LONGER-- RRRR...
EBENEZER SCROOGE FELL BACK, EXHAUSTED AND SANK INTO A HEAVY SLEEP...IN HIS OWN BED.


AWAKENING IN THE MIDDLE OF A PRODIGIOUSLY LOUD SNORE, SCROOGE DID NOT HAVE TO BE TOLD THAT THE BELL WAS AGAIN UPON THE STROKE OF--
ONE.
DONG

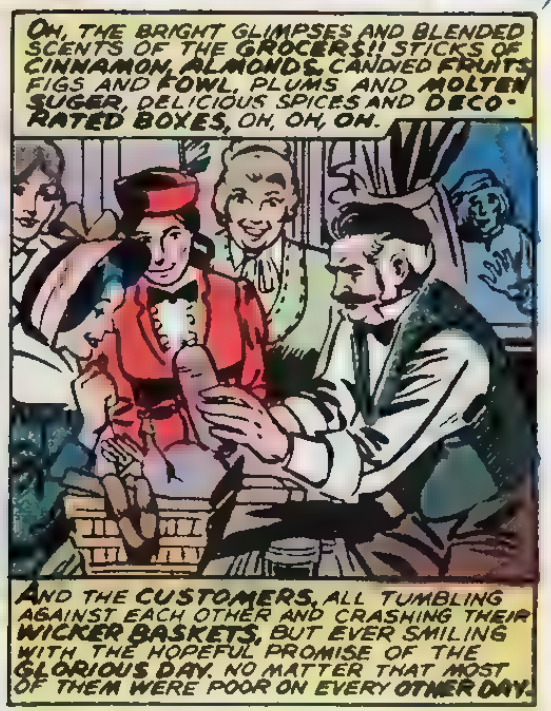

INDEED, HE HAD THE FEELING THAT HE HAD BEEN RESTORED TO CONSCIOUSNESS JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME...
ARISE, MAN! ARISE AND KNOW ME BETTER!
...AND FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF MEETING JACOB MARLEY'S NEXT MESSENGER...

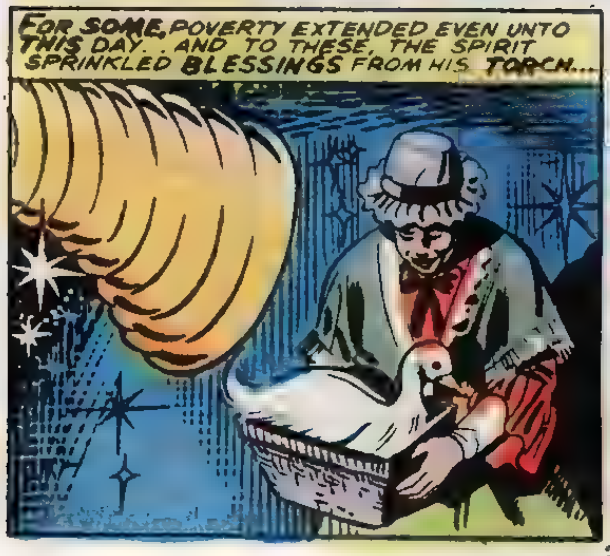
STAVE THREE:
THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS
I AM THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT! LOOK UPON ME!
YES I... I [illegible]... AND I GIVE UP WONDERING HOW OR WHY.

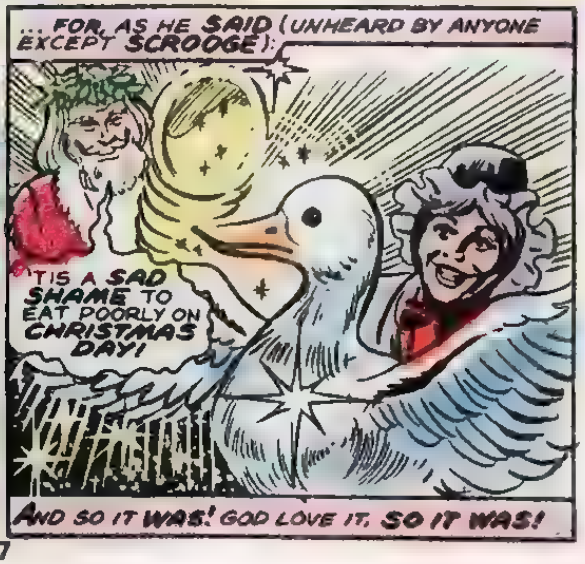
THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT ROSE...
SPIRIT, CONDUCT ME WHERE YOU WILL. I WENT FORTH LAST NIGHT AGAINST MY WILL, AND I LEARNED A LESSON WHICH IS WORKING NOW. TONIGHT, IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO TEACH ME, I AM WILLING TO PROFIT BY IT.
THEN TOUCH MY ROBE, EBENEZER SCROOGE!

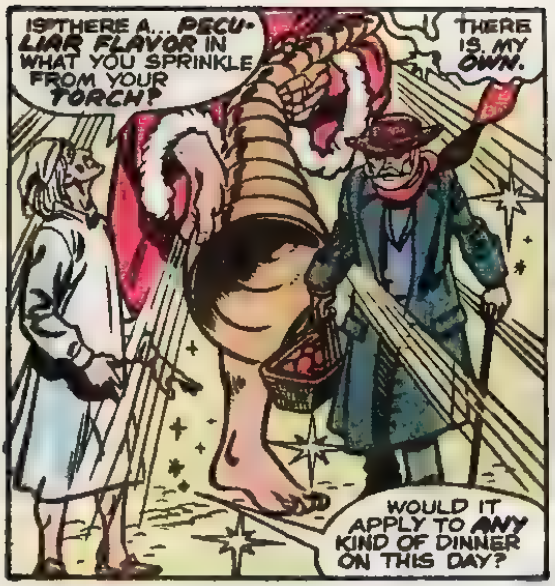
SCROOGE DID AS HE WAS TOLD, HELD FAST, AND THE ROOM OF COURSE -- DISAPPEARED...

...AND THEY STOOD ON THE CITY STREETS ON CHRISTMAS MORNING.
THE SCENE WAS CERTAINLY BLEAK ENOUGH, THERE BEING NOTHING CHEERFUL ABOUT THE CLIMATE OR THE TOWN, AND YET THERE WAS AN AIR OF CHEERFULNESS ABROAD THAT THE SUMMER SUN COULD NEVER MATCH.

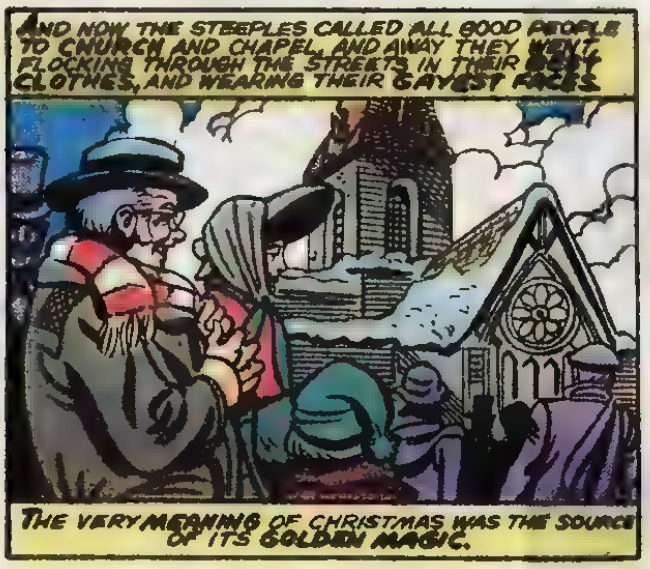

OH, THE BRIGHT GLIMPSES AND BLENDED SCENTS OF THE GROCERS!! STICKS OF CINNAMON, ALMONDS, CANDIED FRUITS, FIGS AND FOWL, PLUMS AND MOLTEN SUGER, DELICIOUS SPICES AND DECORATED BOXES, OH, OH, OH.
AND THE CUSTOMERS, ALL TUMBLING AGAINST EACH OTHER AND CRASHING THEIR WICKER BASKETS, BUT EVER SMILING WITH THE HOPEFUL PROMISE OF THE GLORIOUS DAY. NO MATTER THAT MOST OF THEM WERE POOR ON EVERY OTHER DAY.

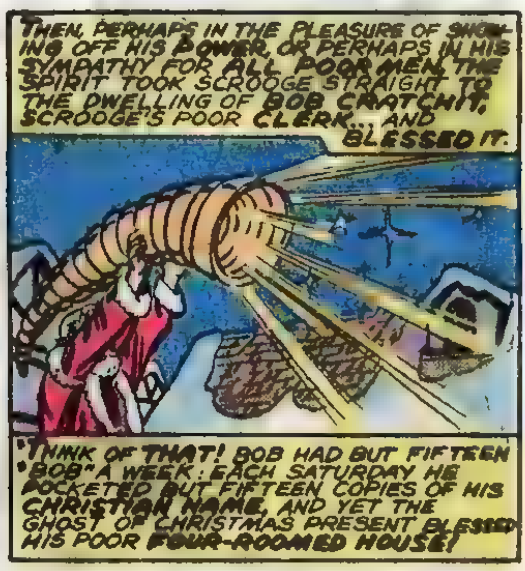

FOR SOME, POVERTY EXTENDED EVEN UNTO THIS DAY. . AND TO THESE, THE SPIRIT SPRINKLED BLESSINGS FROM HIS TORCH...


...FOR, AS HE SAID (UNHEARD BY ANYONE EXCEPT SCROOGE):
'TIS A SAD SHAME TO EAT POORLY ON CHRISTMAS DAY!
AND SO IT WAS! GOD LOVE IT, SO IT WAS!


IS THERE A... PECULIAR FLAVOR IN WHAT YOU SPRINKLE FROM YOUR TORCH?
THERE IS, MY OWN.
WOULD IT APPLY TO ANY KIND OF DINNER ON THIS DAY?

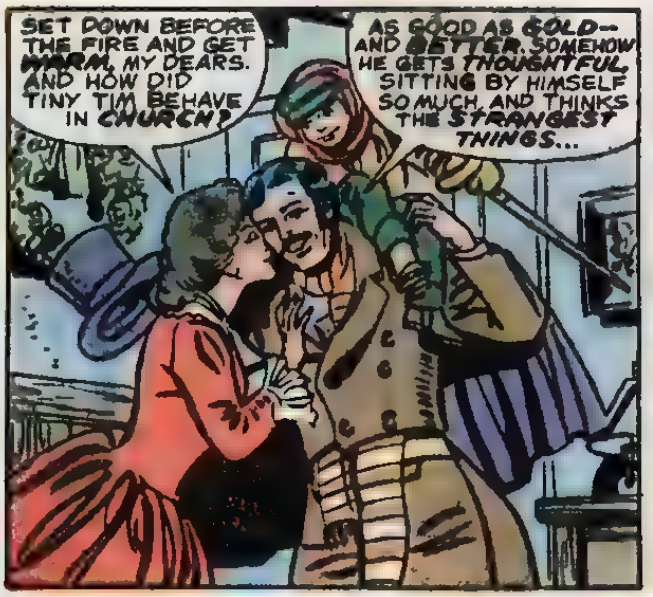
TO ANY KINDLY GIVEN, BUT TO A POOR ONE THE MOST.
WHY TO A POOR ONE MOST?
BECAUSE IT NEEDS IT MOST.

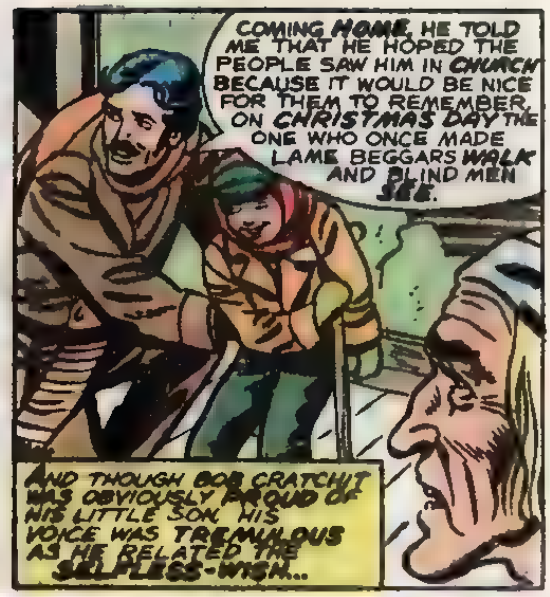

AND NOW THE STEEPLES CALLED ALL GOOD PEOPLE TO CHURCH AND CHAPEL, AND AWAY THEY WENT, FLOCKING THROUGH THE STREETS IN THEIR BEST CLOTHES, AND WEARING THEIR GAYEST FACES.
THE VERY MEANING OF CHRISTMAS WAS THE SOURCE OF ITS GOLDEN MAGIC.


THEN, PERHAPS IN THE PLEASURE OF SHOWING OFF HIS POWER, OR PERHAPS IN HIS SYMPATHY FOR ALL POOR MEN, THE SPIRIT TOOK SCROOGE STRAIGHT TO THE DWELLING OF BOB CRATCHIT, SCROOGE'S POOR CLERK... AND BLESSED IT.
THINK OF THAT! BOB HAD BUT FIFTEEN "BOB" A WEEK; EACH SATURDAY HE POCKETED BUT FIFTEEN COPIES OF HIS CHRISTIAN NAME, AND YET THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT BLESSED HIS POOR FOUR-ROOMED HOUSE!

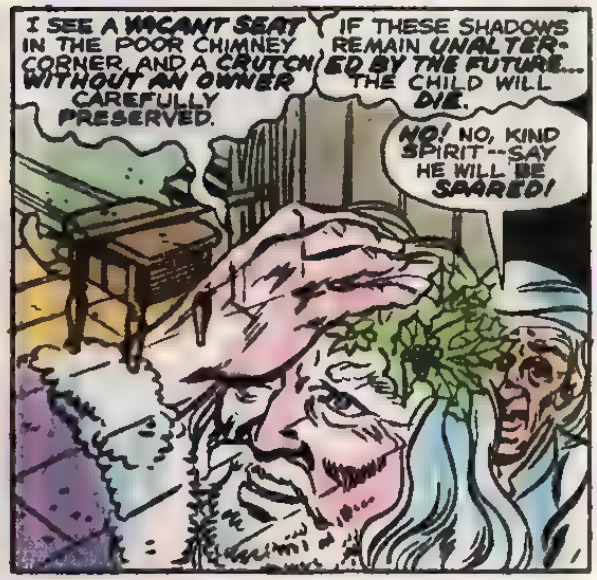
OH, WHAT A GOOSE, MOTHER! SUCH A GOOSE!
BLESS YOUR HEART, DEAR--BUT WHATEVER HAS HAPPENED TO YOUR FATHER? AND YOUR LITTLE BROTHER, TINY TIM?

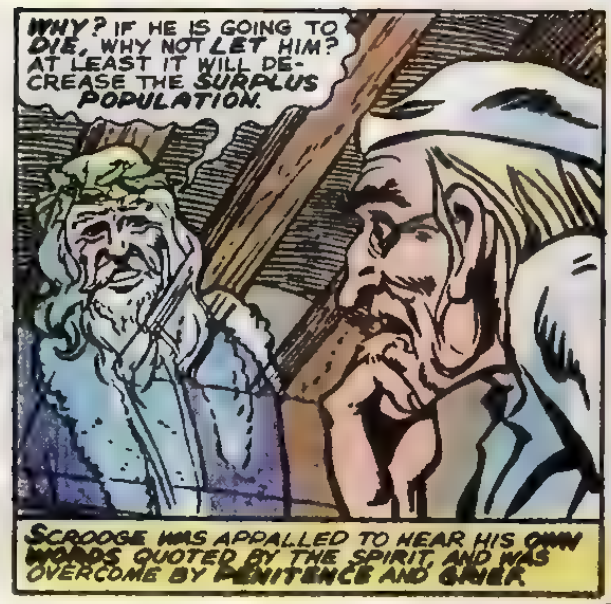
HERE'S FATHER-- AND TINY TIM-- THEY'RE COMING NOW!
GOOD DINNER WILL BE SOON, CHILDREN, AND-- GOD WILLING--IT SHALL BE OUR BEST CHRISTMAS DINNER YET!

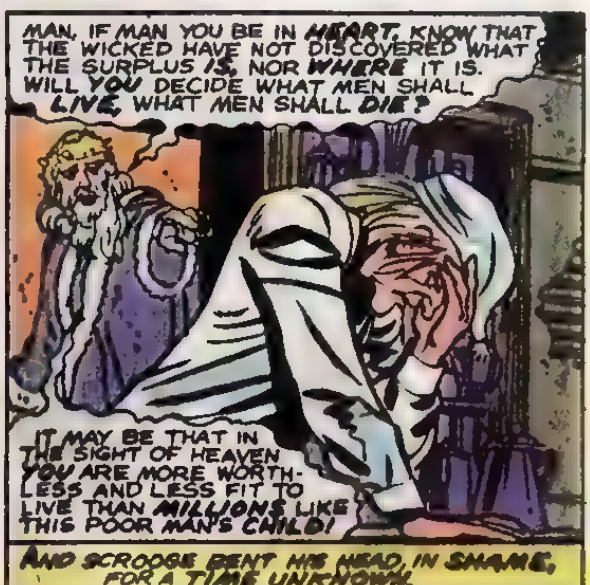

SET DOWN BEFORE THE FIRE AND GET WARM, MY DEARS. AND HOW DID TINY TIM BEHAVE IN CHURCH?
AS GOOD AS GOLD--AND BETTER. SOMEHOW HE GETS THOUGHTFUL SITTING BY HIMSELF SO MUCH, AND THINKS THE STRANGEST THINGS...

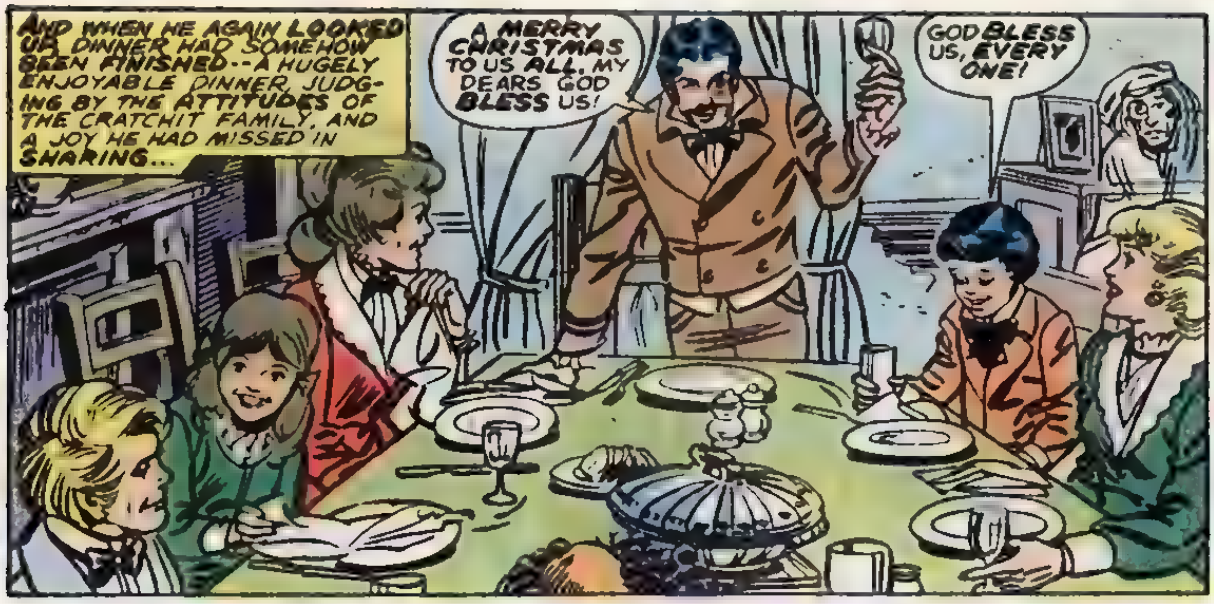

COMING HOME, HE TOLD ME THAT HE HOPED THE PEOPLE SAW HIM IN CHURCH BECAUSE IT WOULD BE NICE FOR THEM TO REMEMBER, ON CHRISTMAS DAY THE ONE WHO ONCE MADE LAME BEGGARS WALK AND BLIND MEN SEE.
AND THOUGH BOB CRATCHIT WAS OBVIOUSLY PROUD OF HIS LITTLE SON, HIS VOICE WAS TREMULOUS AS HE RELATED THE SELFLESS-WISH...

...AND HIS VOICE TREMBLED EVEN MORE WHEN HE INSISTED THAT TINY TIM WAS GROWING STRONG AND HEARTY, BUT, WITH ONE LOOK, SCROOGE KNEW IT WAS A LIE...
SPIRIT... TELL ME IF TINY TIM WILL LIVE.

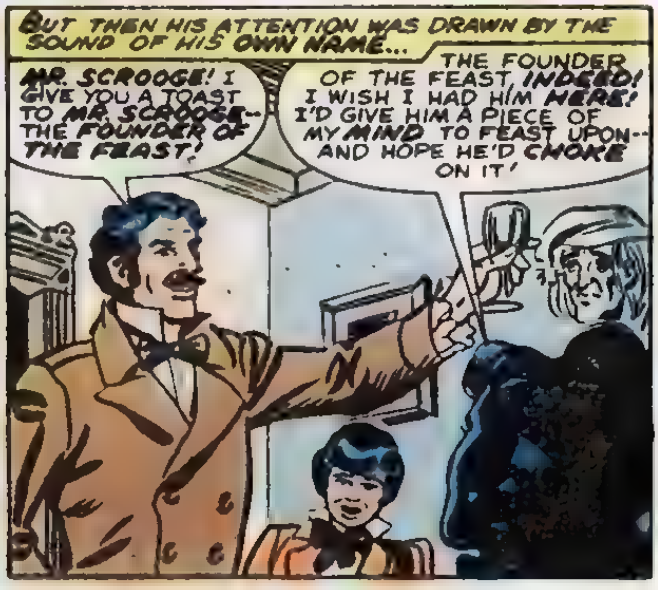

I SEE A VACANT SEAT IN THE POOR CHIMNEY CORNER, AND A CRUTCH WITHOUT AN OWNER CAREFULLY PRESERVED.
IF THESE SHADOWS REMAIN UNALTERED BY THE FUTURE... THE CHILD WILL DIE.
NO! NO, KIND SPIRIT--SAY HE WILL BE SPARED!

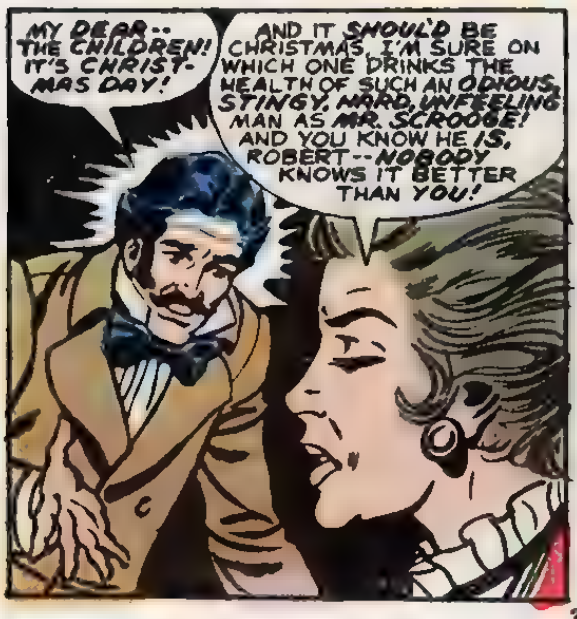

WHY? IF HE IS GOING TO DIE, WHY NOT LET HIM? AT LEAST IT WILL DECREASE THE SURPLUS POPULATION.
SCROOGE WAS APPALLED TO HEAR HIS OWN WORDS QUOTED BY THE SPIRIT, AND WAS OVERCOME BY PENITENCE AND GRIEF.

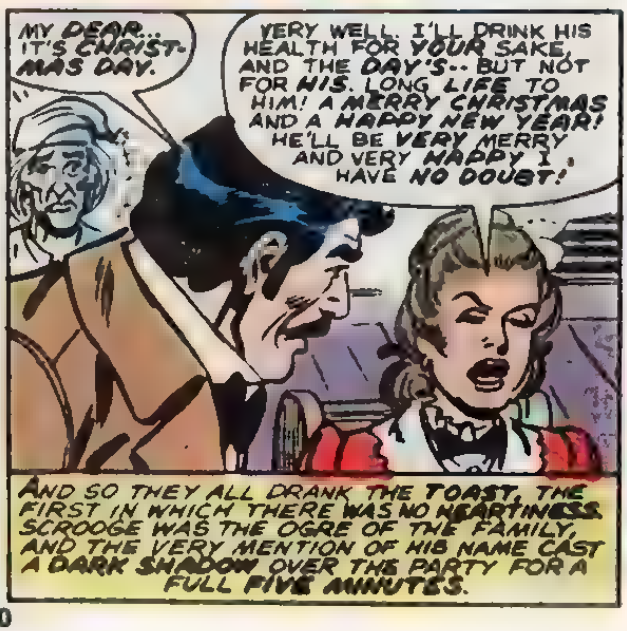

MAN, IF MAN YOU BE IN HEART, KNOW THAT THE WICKED HAVE NOT DISCOVERED WHAT THE SURPLUS IS, NOR WHERE IT IS. WILL YOU DECIDE WHAT MEN SHALL LIVE, WHAT MEN SHALL DIE?
IT MAY BE THAT IN THE SIGHT OF HEAVEN YOU ARE MORE WORTHLESS AND LESS FIT TO LIVE THAN MILLIONS LIKE THIS POOR MAN'S CHILD!
AND SCROOGE BENT HIS HEAD, IN SHAME, FOR A TIME UNKNOWN.


AND WHEN HE AGAIN LOOKED UP, DINNER HAD SOMEHOW BEEN FINISHED--A HUGELY ENJOYABLE DINNER, JUDGING BY THE ATTITUDES OF THE CRATCHIT FAMILY, AND A JOY HE HAD MISSED IN SHARING...
A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO US ALL, MY DEARS. GOD BLESS US!
GOD BLESS US, EVERY ONE!

UPON HEARING TINY TIM'S WORDS, SCROOGE LOOKED UPON THE BENEVOLENT SPIRIT AND KNEW, WITH FRESH AWE, THAT GOD HAD BLESSED THE CRATCHIT FAMILY... EVERY ONE.

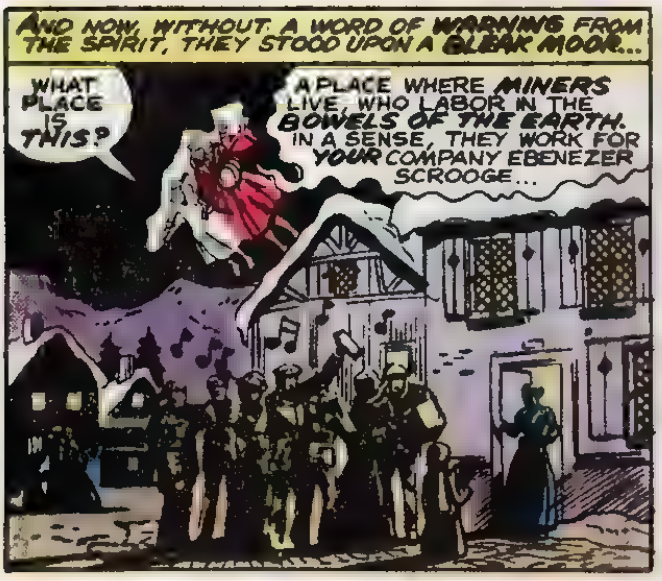

BUT THEN HIS ATTENTION WAS DRAWN BY THE SOUND OF HIS OWN NAME...
MR. SCROOGE! I GIVE YOU A TOAST TO MR. SCROOGE--THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST!
THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST INDEED! I WISH I HAD HIM HERE! I'D GIVE HIM A PIECE OF MY MIND TO FEAST UPON--AND HOPE HE'D CHOKE ON IT!

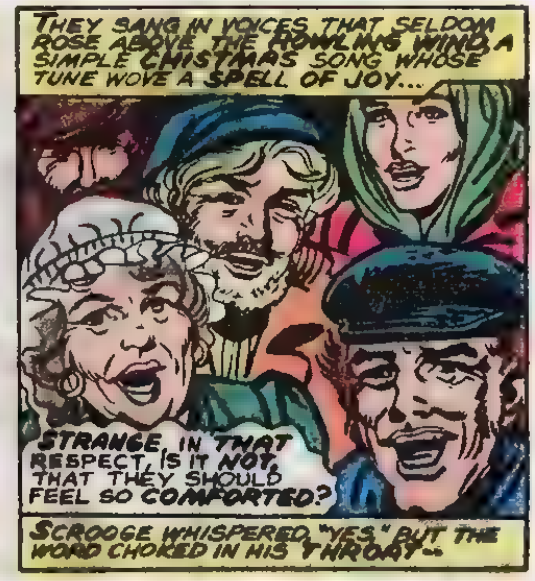

MY DEAR.. THE CHILDREN! IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY!
AND IT SHOULD BE CHRISTMAS, I'M SURE ON WHICH ONE DRINKS THE HEALTH OF SUCH AN ODIOUS, STINGY, HARD, UNFEELING MAN AS MR. SCROOGE! AND YOU KNOW HE IS, ROBERT--NOBODY KNOWS IT BETTER THAN YOU!


MY DEAR... IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY.
VERY WELL. I'LL DRINK HIS HEALTH FOR YOUR SAKE, AND THE DAY'S-- BUT NOT FOR HIS. LONG LIFE TO HIM! A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR! HE'LL BE VERY MERRY AND VERY HAPPY I HAVE NO DOUBT!
AND SO THEY ALL DRANK THE TOAST, THE FIRST IN WHICH THERE WAS NO HEARTINESS. SCROOGE WAS THE OGRE OF THE FAMILY, AND THE VERY MENTION OF HIS NAME CAST A DARK SHADOW OVER THE PARTY FOR A FULL FIVE MINUTES.

BUT WHEN IT CAME TIME TO LEAVE, ALMOST AS IF THE SPIRIT HAD ORDERED IT SO, THE CRATCHITS WERE AGAIN HAPPY, GRATEFUL, PLEASED WITH ONE ANOTHER--AND CONTENTED WITH THEIR POOR LOT IN LIFE.
AND AS THEY PROSPERED, LOOKING HAPPIER YET IN THE BRIGHT SPRINKLINGS OF THE SPIRIT'S TORCH, SCROOGE KEPT HIS EYE UPON THEM UNTIL THE LAST.

...ESPECIALLY ON TINY TIM, PLAINTIVELY SINGING IN THE SUPERNATURAL MIST.


AND NOW, WITHOUT A WORD OF WARNING FROM THE SPIRIT, THEY STOOD UPON A BLEAK MOOR...
WHAT PLACE IS THIS?
A PLACE WHERE MINERS LIVE, WHO LABOR IN THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH. IN A SENSE, THEY WORK FOR YOUR COMPANY EBENEZER SCROOGE...


THEY SANG IN VOICES THAT SELDOM ROSE ABOVE THE HOWLING WIND, A SIMPLE CHRISTMAS SONG WHOSE TUNE WOVE A SPELL OF JOY...
STRANGE, IN THAT RESPECT, IS IT NOT, THAT THEY SHOULD FEEL SO COMFORTED?
SCROOGE WHISPERED "YES," BUT THE WORD CHOKED IN HIS THROAT...

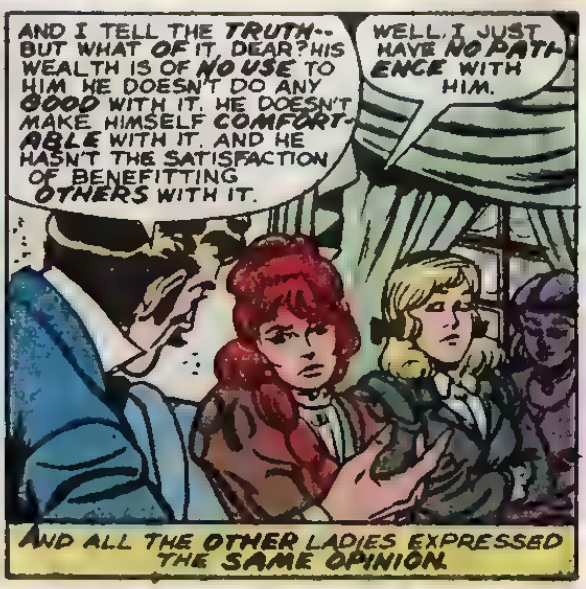
--AND THEN HE WAS ELSEWHERE, FAR OUT AT SEA, AND IN HARSH CONDITIONS THAT SHOULD HAVE DISPIRITED THE MOST EVEN-TEMPERED OF MEN. BUT OF COURSE--
THEY, TOO... ARE HAPPY.
YES, EBENEZER SCROOGE--IT IS CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

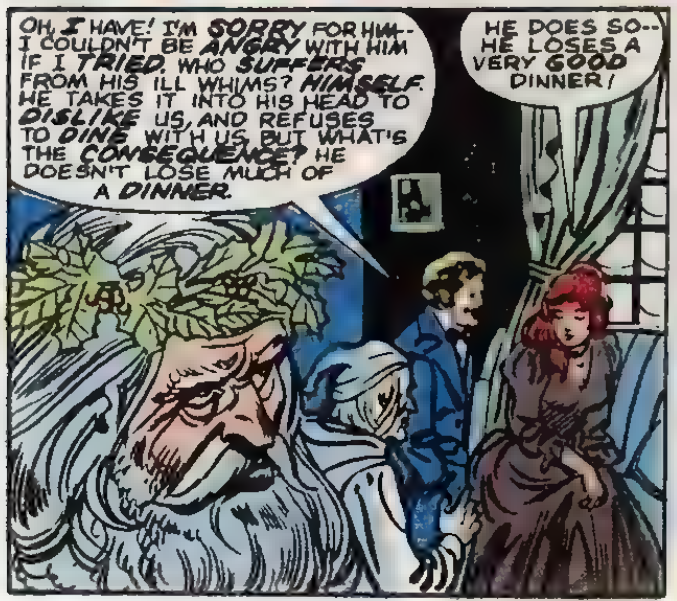
AND NOW, TO SCROOGE'S EVEN GREATER SURPRISE, THEY WERE BACK IN THE CITY, OUTSIDE A FAMILIAR (IF SELDOM VISITED) HOUSE FROM WHICH GREAT LAUGHTER ISSUED...
HA HA HA HA
MY NEPHEW! THAT IS MY NEPHEW'S LAUGH!

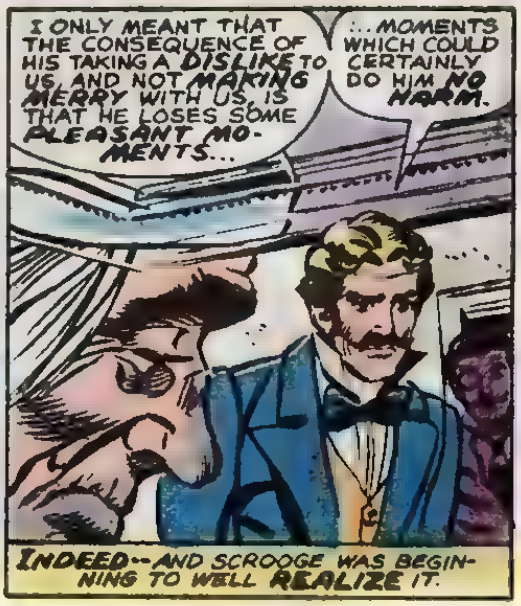
INDEED IT WAS..
HA HA HA HA! AND THEN HE SAID CHRISTMAS WAS HUMBUG -- AS I LIVE AND BREATHE! HUMBUG -- AND HE BELIEVED IT TOO! HA HA HA HA!

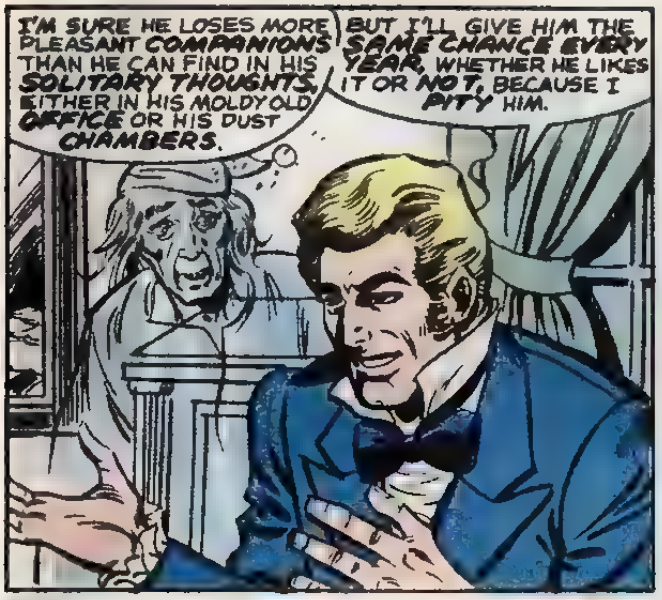
AND MORE SHAME FOR HIM, FRED!
BLESS THE WOMEN! THEY NEVER DO ANYTHING BY HALVES INDEED. THEY ARE ALWAYS IN EARNEST -- AND SCROOGE'S NIECE BY MARRIAGE WAS NO EXCEPTION.

OH, HE'S A COMICAL OLD FELLOW, THAT'S THE TRUTH -- AND NOT AS PLEASANT AS HE MIGHT BE. BUT HIS OFFENSES CARRY THEIR OWN PUNISHMENT, AND I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY AGAINST HIM.
YES, BUT HE'S SO VERY RICH, FRED -- AT LEAST YOU ALWAYS TELL ME SO..

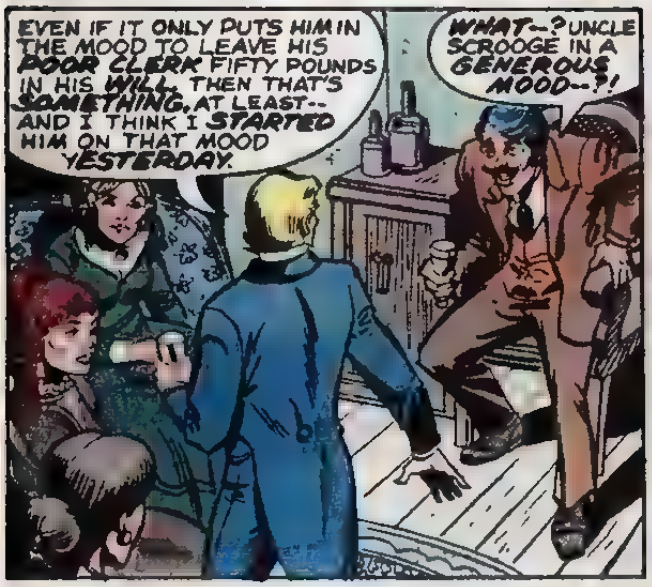

AND I TELL THE TRUTH -- BUT WHAT OF IT, DEAR? HIS WEALTH IS OF NO USE TO HIM. HE DOESN'T DO ANY GOOD WITH IT. HE DOESN'T MAKE HIMSELF COMFORTABLE WITH IT. AND HE HASN'T THE SATISFACTION OF BENEFITTING OTHERS WITH IT.
WELL, I JUST HAVE NO PATIENCE WITH HIM.
AND ALL THE OTHER LADIES EXPRESSED THE SAME OPINION.

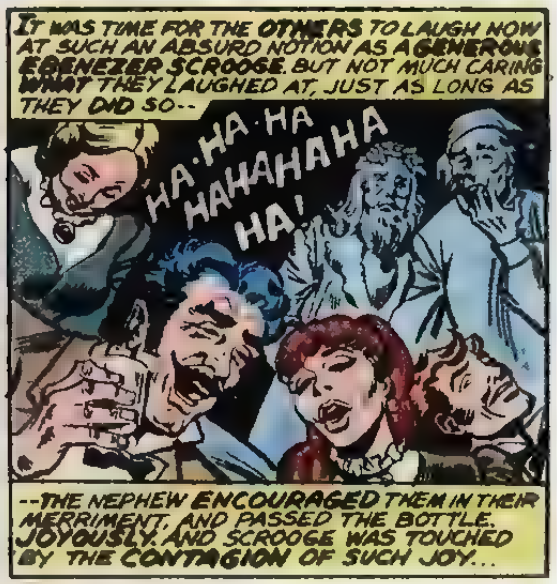

OH, I HAVE! I'M SORRY FOR HIM -- I COULDN'T BE ANGRY WITH HIM IF I TRIED. WHO SUFFERS FROM HIS ILL WHIMS? HIMSELF. HE TAKES IT INTO HIS HEAD TO DISLIKE US, AND REFUSES TO DINE WITH US. BUT WHAT'S THE CONSEQUENCE? HE DOESN'T LOSE MUCH OF A DINNER.
HE DOES SO -- HE LOSES A VERY GOOD DINNER!


I ONLY MEANT THAT THE CONSEQUENCE OF HIS TAKING A DISLIKE TO US, AND NOT MAKING MERRY WITH US, IS THAT HE LOSES SOME PLEASANT MOMENTS...
...MOMENTS WHICH COULD CERTAINLY DO HIM NO HARM.
INDEED -- AND SCROOGE WAS BEGINNING TO WELL REALIZE IT.

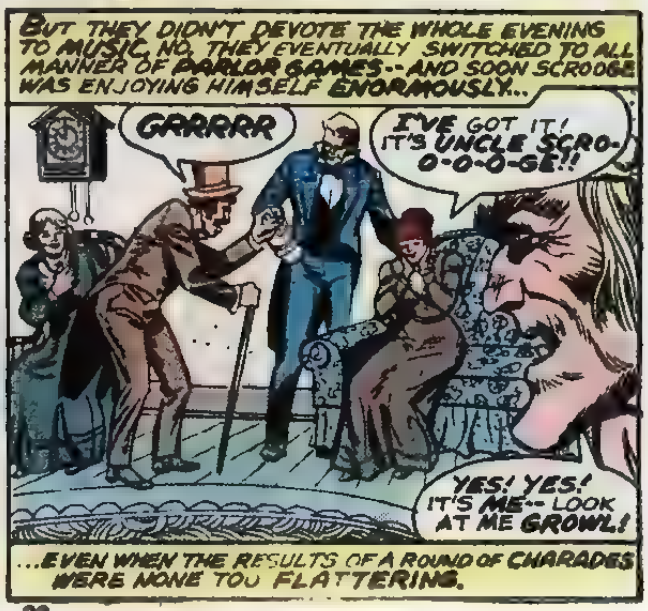

I'M SURE HE LOSES MORE PLEASANT COMPANIONS THAN HE CAN FIND IN HIS SOLITARY THOUGHTS, EITHER IN HIS MOLDY OLD OFFICE OR HIS DUST CHAMBERS.
BUT I'LL GIVE HIM THE SAME CHANCE EVERY YEAR, WHETHER HE LIKES IT OR NOT, BECAUSE I PITY HIM.

HE CAN RAIL AT CHRISTMAS TIL HE DIES, BUT HE CAN'T HELP THINKING BETTER OF CHRISTMAS--I DEFY HIM--IF I GO IN THERE, YEAR AFTER YEAR, AND SAY: "MERRY CHRISTMAS, UNCLE SCROOGE! HOW ARE YOU?"


EVEN IF IT ONLY PUTS HIM IN THE MOOD TO LEAVE HIS POOR CLERK FIFTY POUNDS IN HIS WILL, THEN THAT'S SOMETHING, AT LEAST--AND I THINK I STARTED HIM ON THAT MOOD YESTERDAY.
WHAT--? UNCLE SCROOGE IN A GENEROUS MOOD--?!

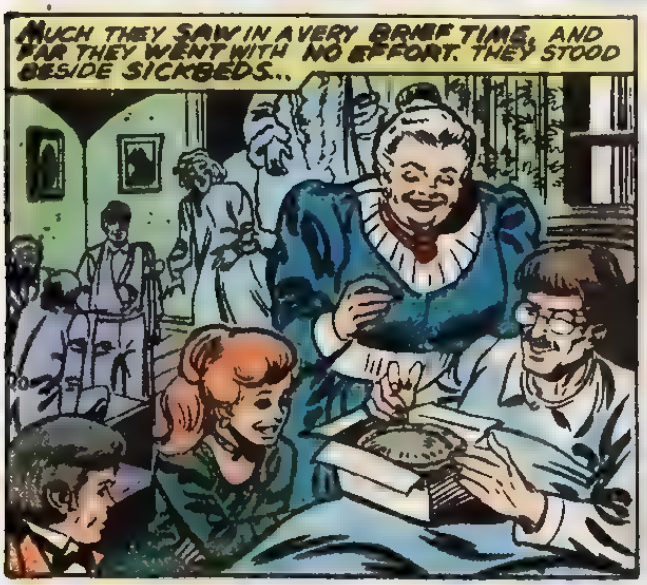

IT WAS TIME FOR THE OTHERS TO LAUGH NOW AT SUCH AN ABSURD NOTION AS A GENEROUS EBENEZER SCROOGE. BUT NOT MUCH CARING WHAT THEY LAUGHED AT, JUST AS LONG AS THEY DID SO--
HA-HA-HA HAHAHAHA HA!
--THE NEPHEW ENCOURAGED THEM IN THEIR MERRIMENT, AND PASSED THE BOTTLE. JOYOUSLY. AND SCROOGE WAS TOUCHED BY THE CONTAGION OF SUCH JOY...

AFTER DRINKS, THEY HAD SOME MUSIC--MOST GLEEFUL SOUNDS, YOU MAY BE ASSURED. EVEN SCROOGE WAS WELL INTO THE SPIRIT OF THINGS...

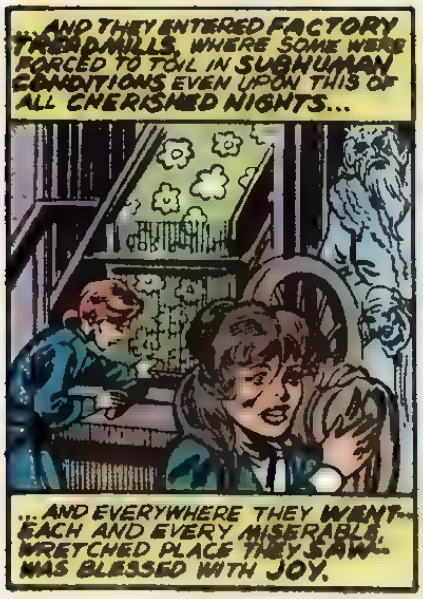

BUT THEY DIDN'T DEVOTE THE WHOLE EVENING TO MUSIC, NO. THEY EVENTUALLY SWITCHED TO ALL MANNER OF PARLOR GAMES--AND SOON SCROOGE WAS ENJOYING HIMSELF ENORMOUSLY...
GRRRRR
I'VE GOT IT! IT'S UNCLE SCRO-O-O-O-GE!!
YES! YES! IT'S ME--LOOK AT ME GROWL!
...EVEN WHEN THE RESULTS OF A ROUND OF CHARADES WERE NONE TOO FLATTERING.

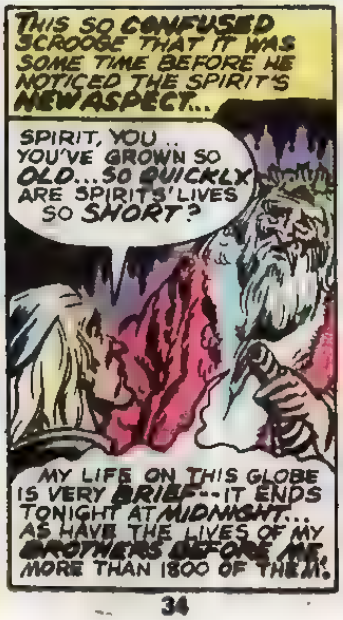
THE SPIRIT WAS IMMENSELY PLEASED TO FIND SCROOGE IN THIS MOOD AND LOOKED UPON HIM WITH SUCH FAVOR THAT SCROOGE BEGGED LIKE A CHILD TO BE ALLOWED TO STAY UNTIL THE GUESTS DEPARTED...
THEY'RE PLAYING A NEW GAME NOW! ONLY ANOTHER HOUR, SPIRIT-- ONLY ONE MORE HOUR!
BUT THIS THE SPIRIT SAID COULD NOT BE DONE.

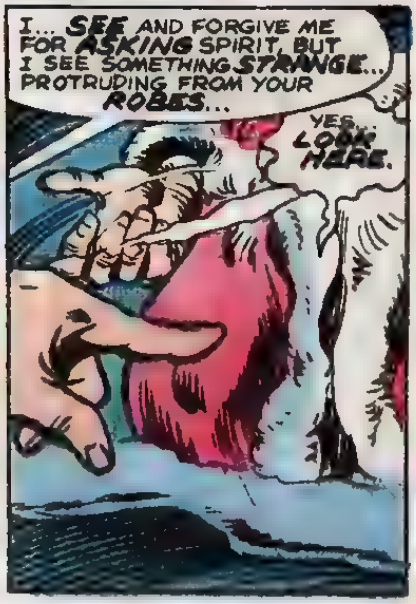
AND THEY IMMEDIATELY WHISKED OFF INTO THE NIGHT SKY, ONCE AGAIN ON THEIR FAR-RANGING TRAVELS...

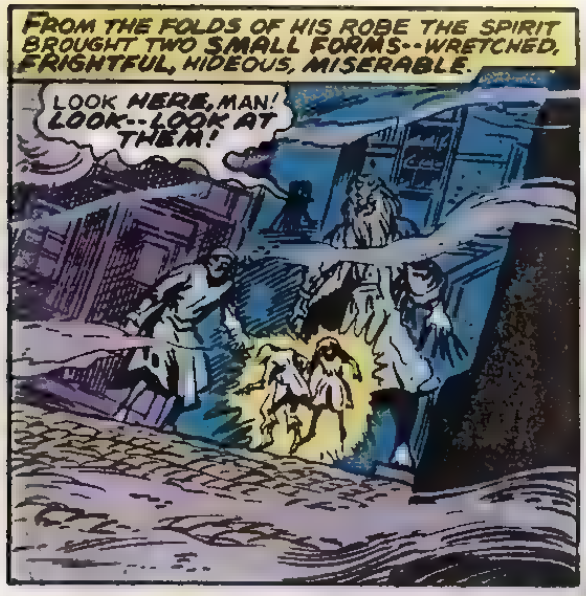

MUCH THEY SAW IN A VERY BRIEF TIME, AND FAR THEY WENT WITH NO EFFORT. THEY STOOD BESIDE SICKBEDS...

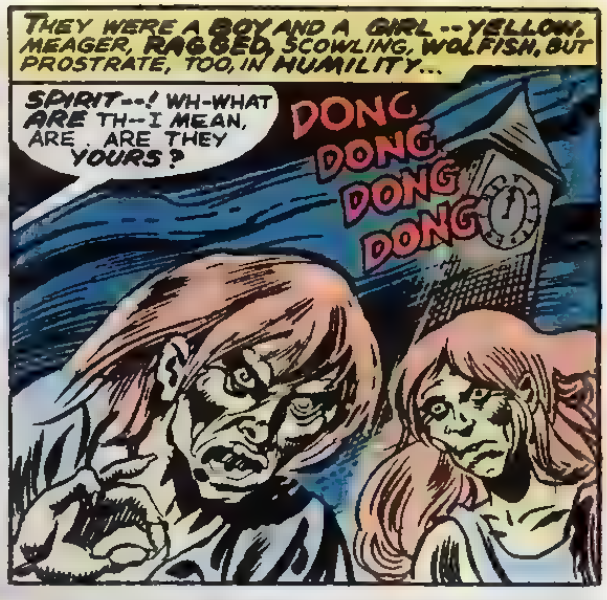
... AND THEY VISITED JAILS WHOSE PRISONERS' ONLY CRIMES WERE THOSE OF POVERTY AND WANT...

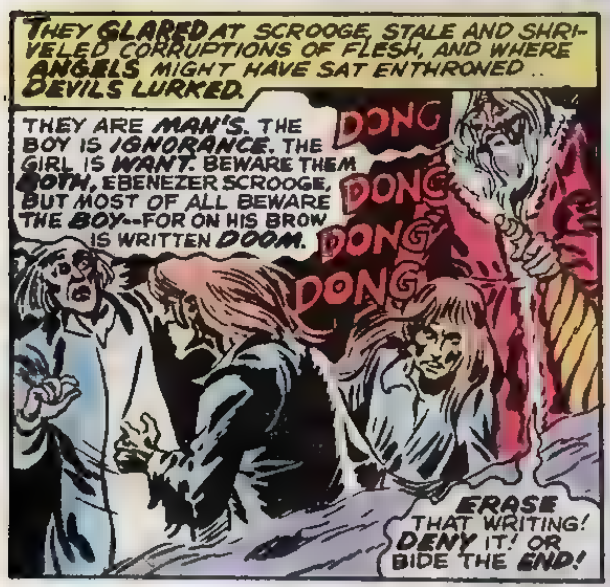

... AND THEY ENTERED FACTORY TREADMILLS, WHERE SOME WERE FORCED TO TOIL IN SUBHUMAN CONDITIONS EVEN UPON THIS OF ALL CHERISHED NIGHTS...
... AND EVERYWHERE THEY WENT... EACH AND EVERY MISERABLE, WRETCHED PLACE THEY SAW... WAS BLESSED WITH JOY.


THIS SO CONFUSED SCROOGE THAT IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE HE NOTICED THE SPIRIT'S NEW ASPECT...
SPIRIT, YOU... YOU'VE GROWN SO OLD... SO QUICKLY ARE SPIRITS' LIVES SO SHORT?
MY LIFE ON THIS GLOBE IS VERY BRIEF--IT ENDS TONIGHT AT MIDNIGHT... AS HAVE THE LIVES OF MY BROTHERS BEFORE ME... MORE THAN 1800 OF THEM.


I... SEE AND FORGIVE ME FOR ASKING SPIRIT, BUT I SEE SOMETHING STRANGE... PROTRUDING FROM YOUR ROBES...
YES... LOOK HERE.

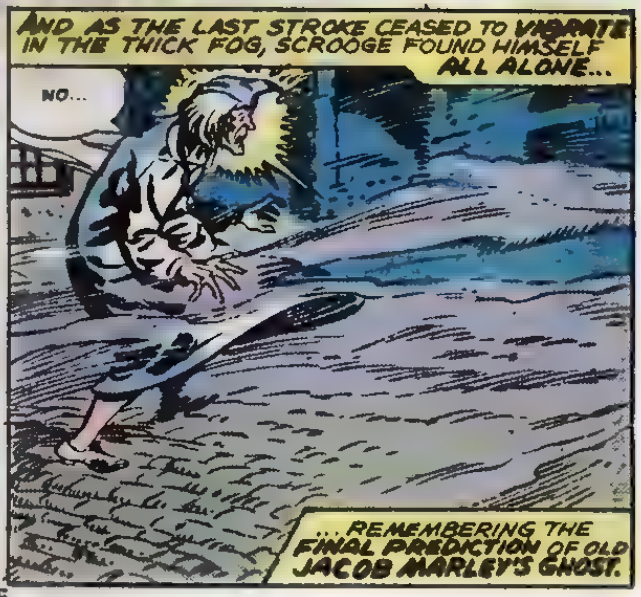

FROM THE FOLDS OF HIS ROBE THE SPIRIT BROUGHT TWO SMALL FORMS--WRETCHED, FRIGHTFUL, HIDEOUS, MISERABLE.
LOOK HERE, MAN! LOOK--LOOK AT THEM!


THEY WERE A BOY AND A GIRL--YELLOW, MEAGER, RAGGED, SCOWLING, WOLFISH, BUT PROSTRATE, TOO, IN HUMILITY...
SPIRIT--! WH-WHAT ARE TH--I MEAN, ARE ARE THEY YOURS?
DONG DONG DONG DONG

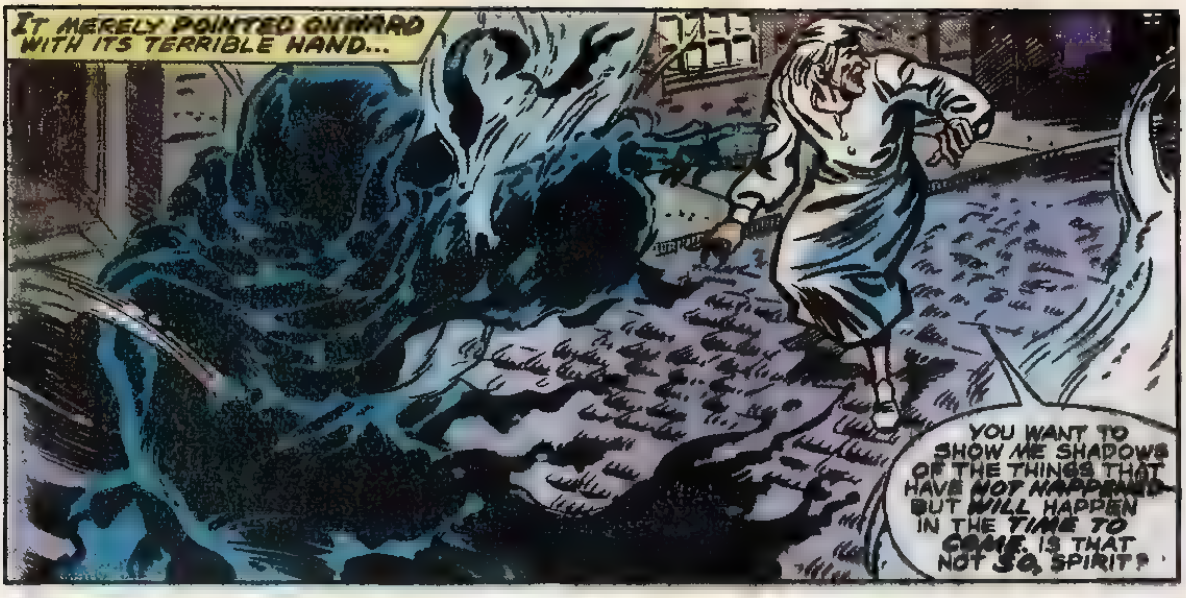

THEY GLARED AT SCROOGE, STALE AND SHRIVELED CORRUPTIONS OF FLESH, AND WHERE ANGELS MIGHT HAVE SAT ENTHRONED .. DEVILS LURKED.
THEY ARE MAN'S. THE BOY IS IGNORANCE. THE GIRL IS WANT. BEWARE THEM BOTH, EBENEZER SCROOGE, BUT MOST OF ALL BEWARE THE BOY--FOR ON HIS BROW IS WRITTEN DOOM.
DONG DONG DONG DONG
ERASE THAT WRITING! DENY IT! OR BIDE THE END!

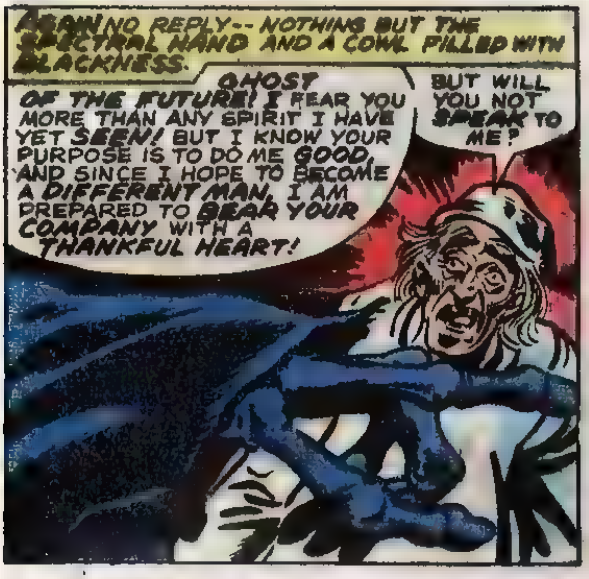
BUT... BUT HAVE THEY NO REFUGE OR RESOURSES?!
THOSE WHO ARE BADLY OFF CAN ALWAYS GO TO PRISON, EBENEZER SCROOGE, OR WORK IN THE TREADMILL...
DONG DONG DONG

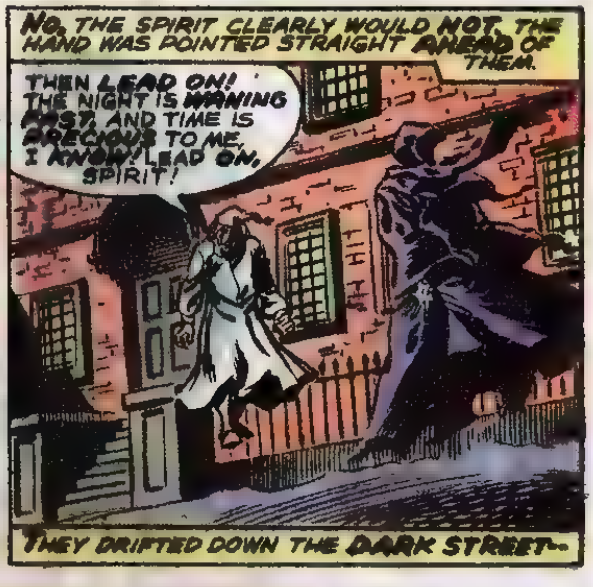
NOOOOO!!
DONGGG
THE BELL STRUCK TWELVE.

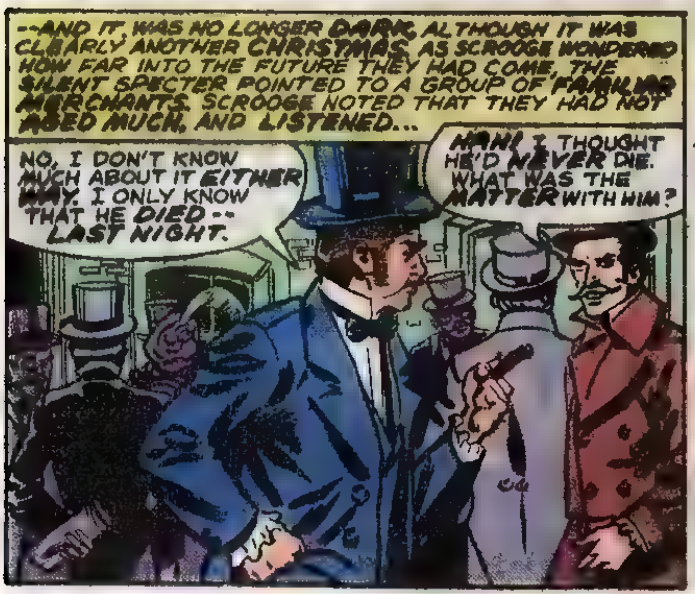

AND AS THE LAST STROKE CEASED TO VIBRATE IN THE THICK FOG, SCROOGE FOUND HIMSELF ALL ALONE...
NO...
...REMEMBERING THE FINAL PREDICTION OF OLD JACOB MARLEY'S GHOST.

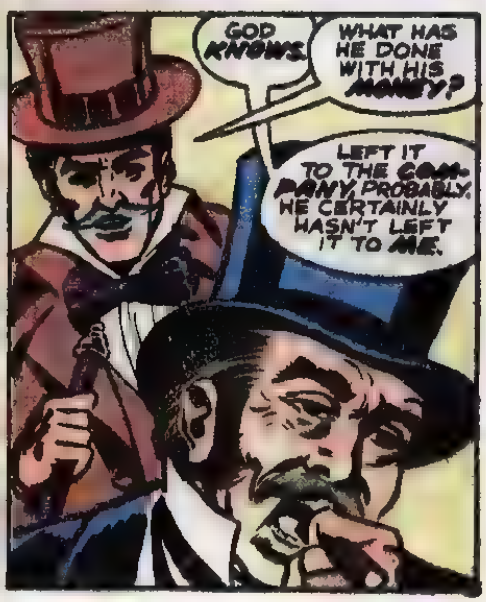
SCROOGE LOOKED DEEP INTO THE ROILING GLOOM AND BEHELD A SOLEMN PHANTOM, DRAPED AND HOODED IN BLACK, COMING LIKE MIST ALONG THE GROUND... STRAIGHT TOWARD HIM.
STAVE FOUR:
THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS
SCATTERING MYSTERY THROUGH THE VERY AIR IN WHICH IT MOVED, THE GHOST GLIDED CLOSER...AND SCROOGE WAS FILLED WITH ABIDING DREAD.
AM I IN THE PRESENCE...OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME?
BUT THE PHANTOM ANSWERED NOT...

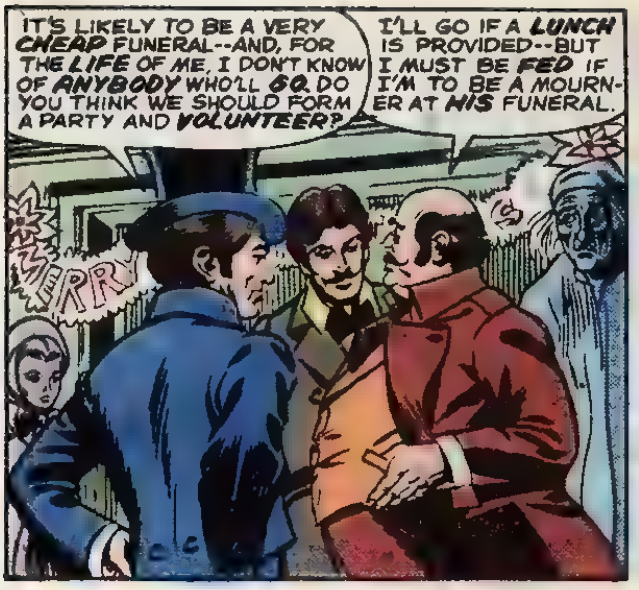

IT MERELY POINTED ONWARD WITH ITS TERRIBLE HAND...
YOU WANT TO SHOW ME SHADOWS OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT HAPPENED BUT WILL HAPPEN IN THE TIME TO COME. IS THAT NOT SO, SPIRIT?


AGAIN NO REPLY-- NOTHING BUT THE SPECTRAL HAND AND A COWL FILLED WITH BLACKNESS.
GHOST OF THE FUTURE! I FEAR YOU MORE THAN ANY SPIRIT I HAVE YET SEEN! BUT I KNOW YOUR PURPOSE IS TO DO ME GOOD, AND SINCE I HOPE TO BECOME A DIFFERENT MAN, I AM PREPARED TO BEAR YOUR COMPANY WITH A THANKFUL HEART!
BUT WILL YOU NOT SPEAK TO ME?


NO, THE SPIRIT CLEARLY WOULD NOT, THE HAND WAS POINTED STRAIGHT AHEAD OF THEM.
THEN LEAD ON! THE NIGHT IS WASTING FAST, AND TIME IS PRECIOUS TO ME. I KNOW! LEAD ON, SPIRIT!
THEY DRIFTED DOWN THE DARK STREET--

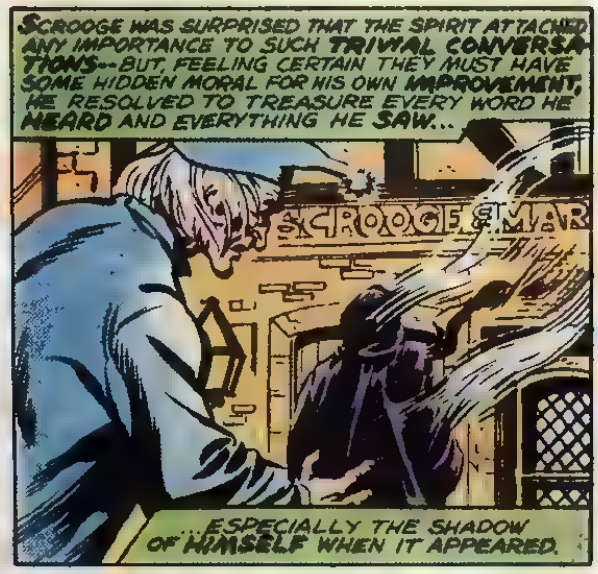

--AND IT WAS NO LONGER DARK. ALTHOUGH IT WAS CLEARLY ANOTHER CHRISTMAS, AS SCROOGE WONDERED HOW FAR INTO THE FUTURE THEY HAD COME, THE SILENT SPECTER POINTED TO A GROUP OF FAMILIAR MERCHANTS. SCROOGE NOTED THAT THEY HAD NOT AGED MUCH, AND LISTENED...
NO, I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT EITHER WAY. I ONLY KNOW THAT HE DIED -- LAST NIGHT.
HAH! I THOUGHT HE'D NEVER DIE. WHAT WAS THE MATTER WITH HIM?


GOD KNOWS.
WHAT HAS HE DONE WITH HIS MONEY?
LEFT IT TO THE COMPANY, PROBABLY. HE CERTAINLY HASN'T LEFT IT TO ME.

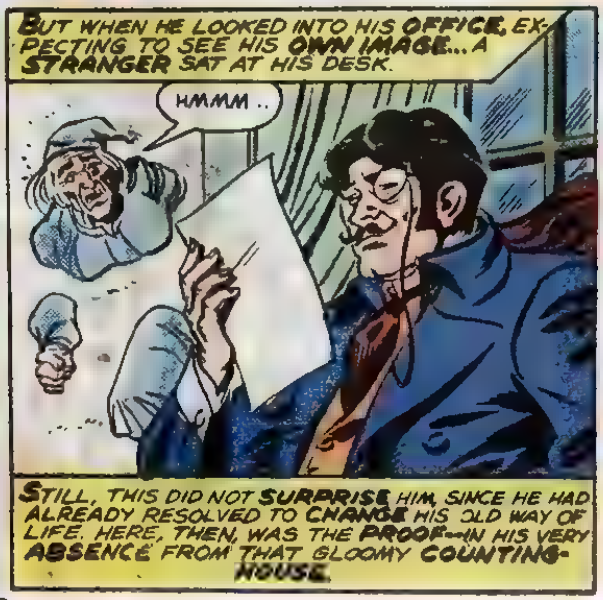

IT'S LIKELY TO BE A VERY CHEAP FUNERAL--AND, FOR THE LIFE OF ME, I DON'T KNOW OF ANYBODY WHO'LL GO. DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD FORM A PARTY AND VOLUNTEER?
I'LL GO IF A LUNCH IS PROVIDED--BUT I MUST BE FED IF I'M TO BE A MOURNER AT HIS FUNERAL.
SKRRR

THERE WERE A FEW SNORTS AND SEVERAL LAUGHS, AND THE MERCHANTS STROLLED AWAY...
SCROOGE LOOKED TO THE SPIRIT FOR AN EXPLANATION--

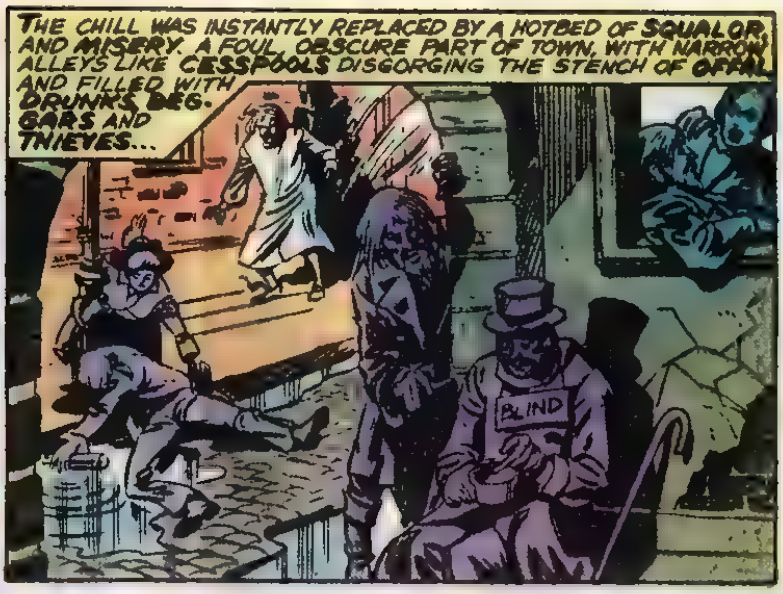
--BUT IT SIMPLY POINTED TO TWO OTHER PERSONS ON THE STREET.
WELL, I HEAR OLD SCRATCH GOT HIS OWN AT LAST, HEY?
SO I AM TOLD, COLD, ISN'T IT?
SEASONABLE FOR CHRISTMAS-TIME.
AND NOT ANOTHER WORD THAT WAS THEIR MEETING, THEIR CONVERSATION, AND THEIR PARTING.

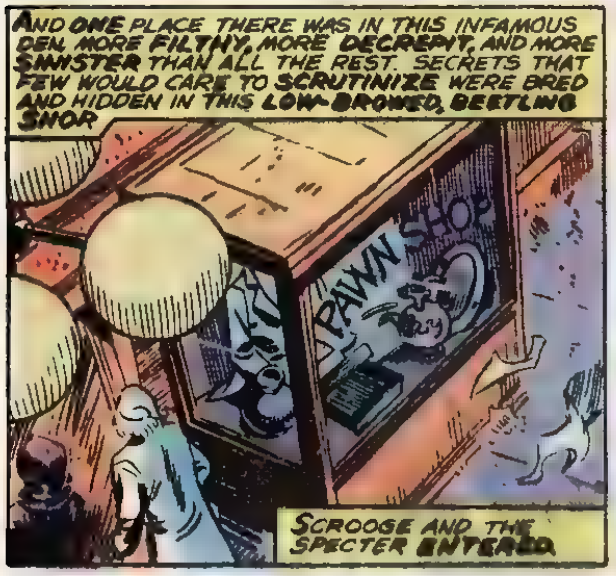

SCROOGE WAS SURPRISED THAT THE SPIRIT ATTACHED ANY IMPORTANCE TO SUCH TRIVIAL CONVERSATIONS--BUT, FEELING CERTAIN THEY MUST HAVE SOME HIDDEN MORAL FOR HIS OWN IMPROVEMENT, HE RESOLVED TO TREASURE EVERY WORD HE HEARD AND EVERYTHING HE SAW...
SCROOGE & MARLEY
...ESPECIALLY THE SHADOW OF HIMSELF WHEN IT APPEARED.

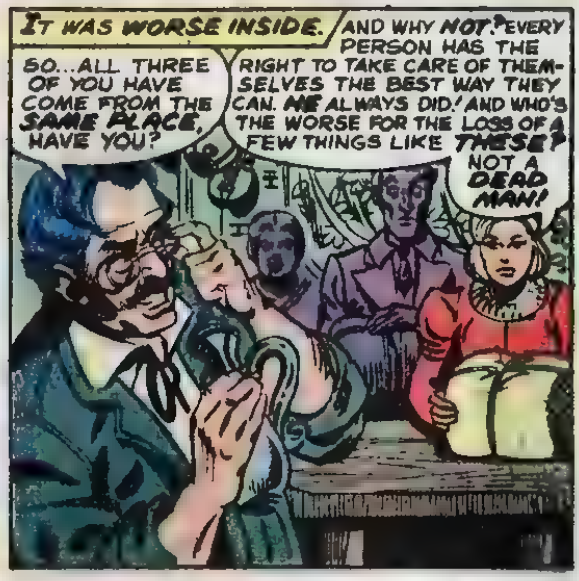
INDEED, SCROOGE WAS CERTAIN THAT THE CONDUCT OF HIS FUTURE SELF WOULD GIVE HIM THE CLUES TO ENLIGHTENMENT HE HAD THUS FAR MISSED, AND WOULD RENDER THE SOLUTION TO THESE RIDDLES...

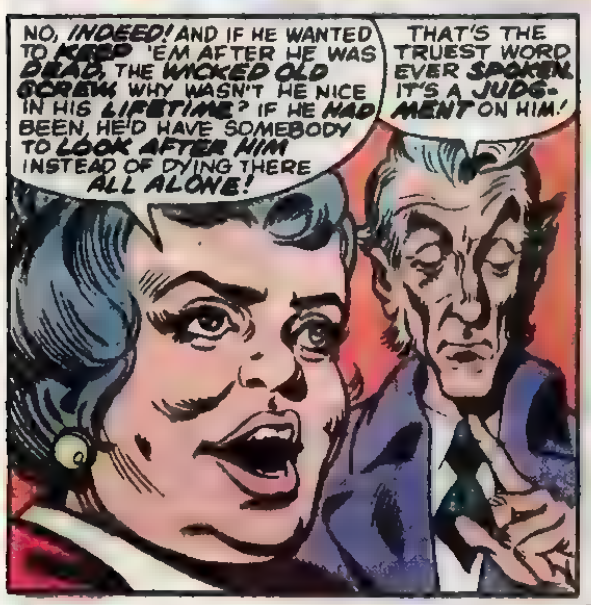

BUT WHEN HE LOOKED INTO HIS OFFICE, EXPECTING TO SEE HIS OWN IMAGE...A STRANGER SAT AT HIS DESK.
HMMM..
STILL, THIS DID NOT SURPRISE HIM, SINCE HE HAD ALREADY RESOLVED TO CHANGE HIS OLD WAY OF LIFE. HERE, THEN, WAS THE PROOF--IN HIS VERY ABSENCE FROM THAT GLOOMY COUNTING-HOUSE.

QUIET AND DARK BEFORE HIM STOOD THE PHANTOM, WITH ITS OUTSTRETCHED HAND, AND SCROOGE FANCIED THAT THE UNSEEN EYES WERE STUDYING HIM KEENLY...
IT MADE HIM SHUDDER, AND FEEL VERY COLD!

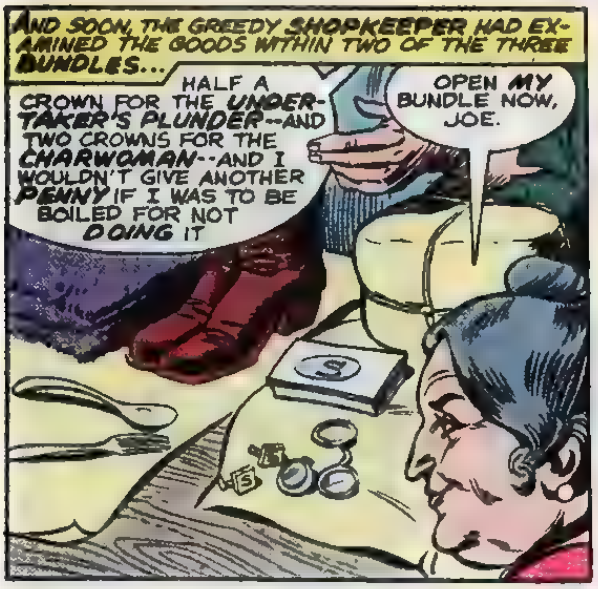

THE CHILL WAS INSTANTLY REPLACED BY A HOTBED OF SQUALOR AND MISERY. A FOUL, OBSCURE PART OF TOWN, WITH NARROW ALLEYS LIKE CESSPOOLS DISGORGING THE STENCH OF OFFAL AND FILLED WITH DRUNK'S, BEG-GARS AND THIEVES...
BLIND


AND ONE PLACE THERE WAS IN THIS INFAMOUS DEN, MORE FILTHY, MORE DECREPIT, AND MORE SINISTER THAN ALL THE REST. SECRETS THAT FEW WOULD CARE TO SCRUTINIZE WERE BRED AND HIDDEN IN THIS LOW-BROWED, BEETLING SNOR
PAWN SHOP
SCROOGE AND THE SPECTER ENTERED

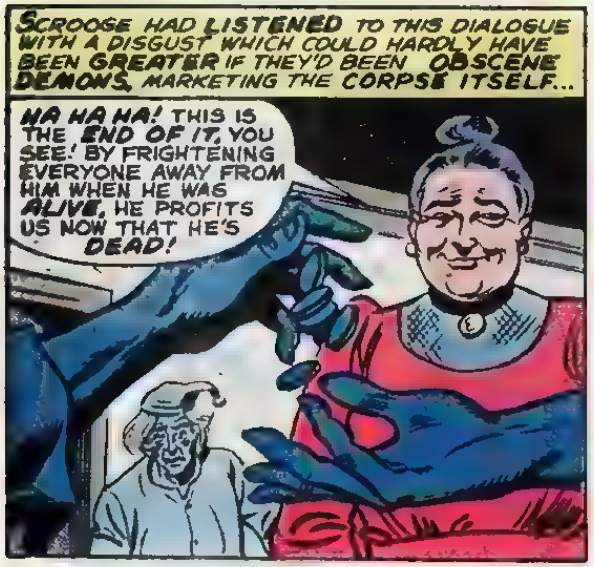

IT WAS WORSE INSIDE.
AND WHY NOT? EVERY PERSON HAS THE RIGHT TO TAKE CARE OF THEM-SELVES THE BEST WAY THEY CAN. HE ALWAYS DID! AND WHO'S THE WORSE FOR THE LOSS OF A FEW THINGS LIKE THESE?
SO...ALL THREE OF YOU HAVE COME FROM THE SAME PLACE, HAVE YOU?
NOT A DEAD MAN!


NO, INDEED! AND IF HE WANTED TO KEEP 'EM AFTER HE WAS DEAD, THE WICKED OLD SCREW, WHY WASN'T HE NICE IN HIS LIFETIME? IF HE HAD BEEN, HE'D HAVE SOMEBODY TO LOOK AFTER HIM INSTEAD OF DYING THERE ALL ALONE!
THAT'S THE TRUEST WORD EVER SPOKEN. IT'S A JUDG-MENT ON HIM!

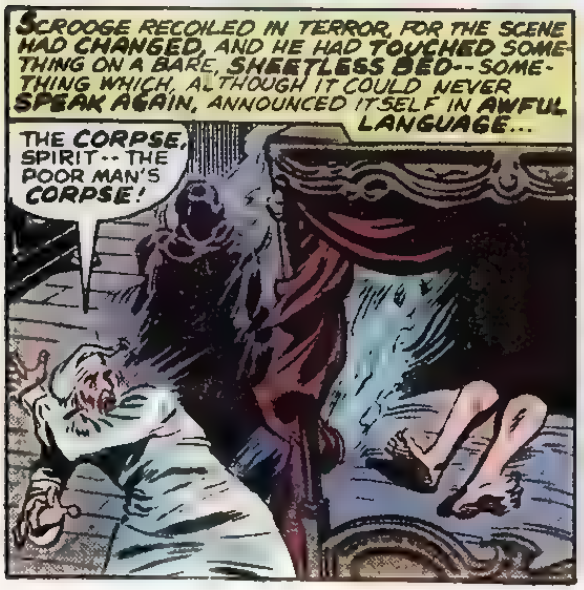
I WISH IT WAS A LITTLE HEAVIER JUDGEMENT-- AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN, IF I COULD HAVE LAID MY HANDS ON ANYTHING ELSE!
ALL RIGHT-- LET'S OPEN YOUR BUNDLES AND WE'LL ADD UP WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

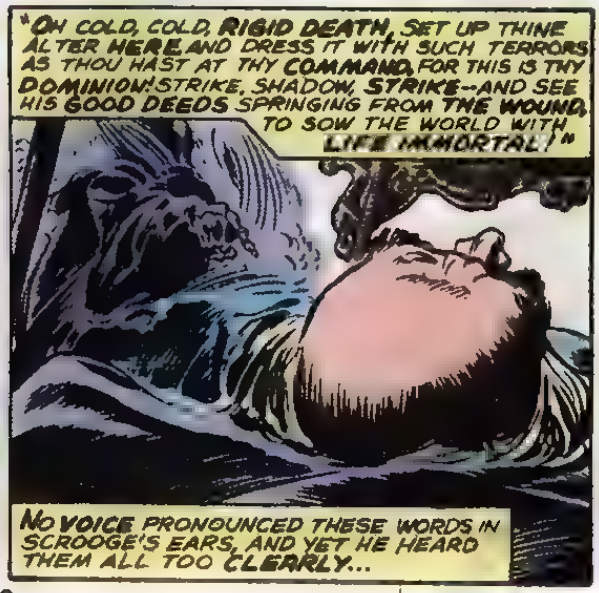

AND SOON, THE GREEDY SHOPKEEPER HAD EXAMINED THE GOODS WITHIN TWO OF THE THREE BUNDLES...
HALF A CROWN FOR THE UNDERTAKER'S PLUNDER--AND TWO CROWNS FOR THE CHARWOMAN--AND I WOULDN'T GIVE ANOTHER PENNY IF I WAS TO BE BOILED FOR NOT DOING IT
OPEN MY BUNDLE NOW, JOE.

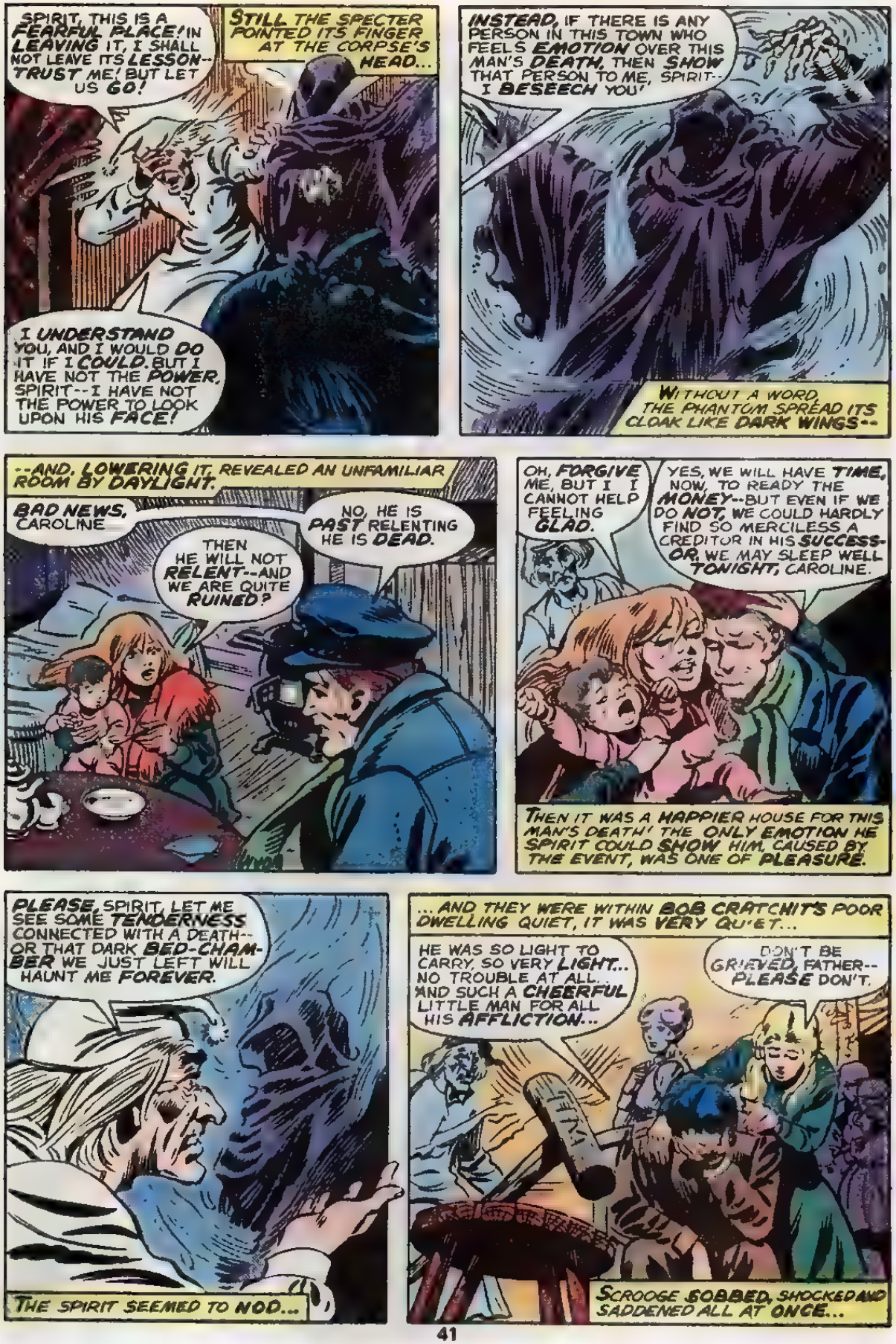
WHAT'S THIS? BED-SHEETS--? YOU DON'T MEAN TO SAY YOU TOOK HIS BEDSHEETS OFF WITH HIM LYING THERE--?
AND WHY NOT? HE ISN'T LIKELY TO CATCH COLD WITHOUT 'EM, I DARE SAY!

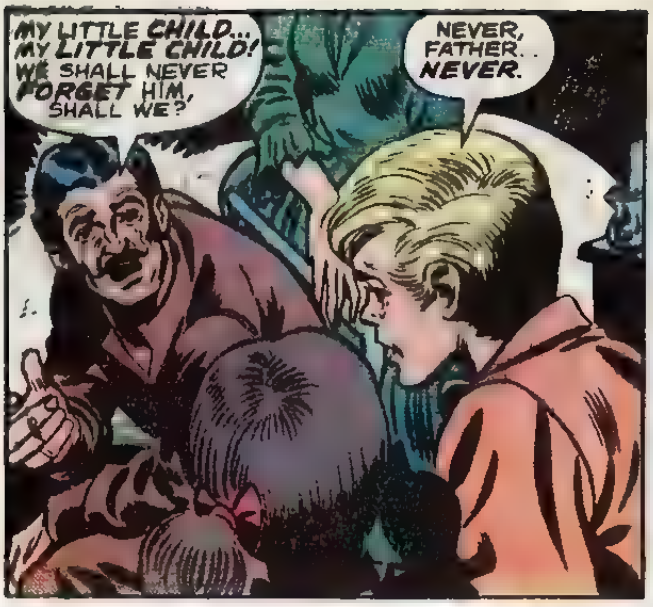

SCROOGE HAD LISTENED TO THIS DIALOGUE WITH A DISGUST WHICH COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN GREATER IF THEY'D BEEN OBSCENE DEMONS, MARKETING THE CORPSE ITSELF...
HA HA HA! THIS IS THE END OF IT, YOU SEE! BY FRIGHTENING EVERYONE AWAY FROM HIM WHEN HE WAS ALIVE, HE PROFITS US NOW THAT HE'S DEAD!

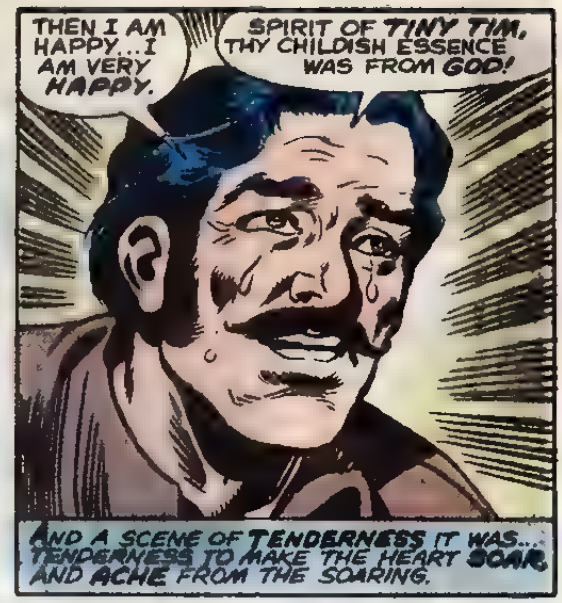
SPIRIT! I UNDERSTAND NOW! THE CASE OF THIS UNHAPPY MAN, WHOEVER HE MAY BE, COULD BECOME MY OWN! MY LIFE TENDS THAT WAY NOW AND--
YAHH!! WHAT IS THIS--?!

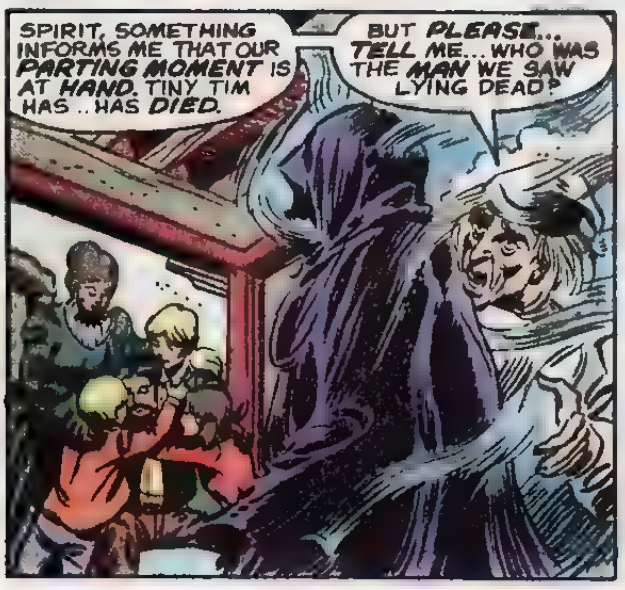

SCROOGE RECOILED IN TERROR, FOR THE SCENE HAD CHANGED, AND HE HAD TOUCHED SOMETHING ON A BARE, SHEETLESS BED--SOMETHING WHICH, ALTHOUGH IT COULD NEVER SPEAK AGAIN, ANNOUNCED ITSELF IN AWFUL LANGUAGE...
THE CORPSE, SPIRIT--THE POOR MAN'S CORPSE!

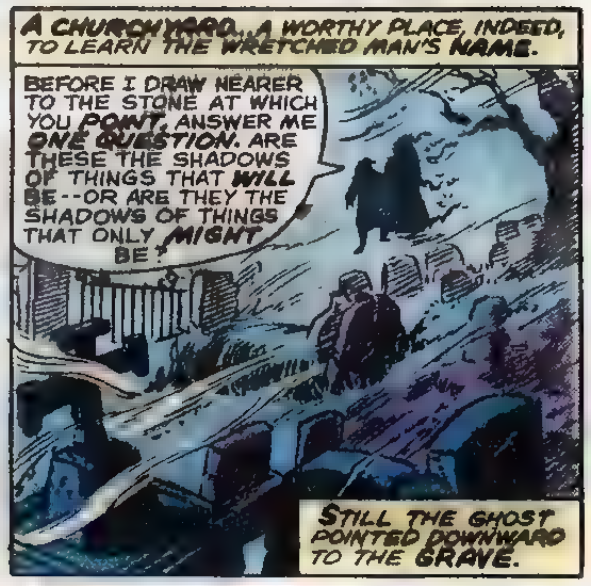

"OH COLD, COLD, RIGID DEATH, SET UP THINE ALTER HERE, AND DRESS IT WITH SUCH TERRORS AS THOU HAST AT THY COMMAND, FOR THIS IS THY DOMINION! STRIKE, SHADOW, STRIKE--AND SEE HIS GOOD DEEDS SPRINGING FROM THE WOUND, TO SOW THE WORLD WITH LIFE IMMORTAL!"
NO VOICE PRONOUNCED THESE WORDS IN SCROOGE'S EARS, AND YET HE HEARD THEM ALL TOO CLEARLY...

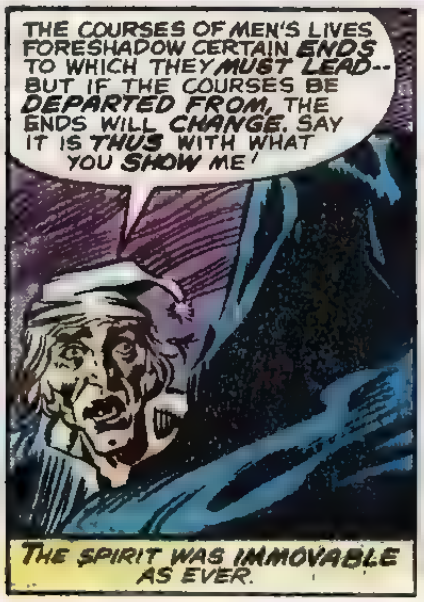

SPIRIT, THIS IS A FEARFUL PLACE! IN LEAVING IT, I SHALL NOT LEAVE ITS LESSON-- TRUST ME! BUT LET US GO!
STILL THE SPECTER POINTED ITS FINGER AT THE CORPSE'S HEAD...
I UNDERSTAND YOU, AND I WOULD DO IT IF I COULD. BUT I HAVE NOT THE POWER, SPIRIT-- I HAVE NOT THE POWER TO LOOK UPON HIS FACE!
INSTEAD, IF THERE IS ANY PERSON IN THIS TOWN WHO FEELS EMOTION OVER THIS MAN'S DEATH, THEN SHOW THAT PERSON TO ME, SPIRIT-- I BESEECH YOU!
WITHOUT A WORD, THE PHANTOM SPREAD ITS CLOAK LIKE DARK WINGS--
--AND, LOWERING IT, REVEALED AN UNFAMILIAR ROOM BY DAYLIGHT.
BAD NEWS, CAROLINE
THEN HE WILL NOT RELENT--AND WE ARE QUITE RUINED?
NO, HE IS PAST RELENTING HE IS DEAD.
OH, FORGIVE ME, BUT I I CANNOT HELP FEELING GLAD.
YES, WE WILL HAVE TIME, NOW, TO READY THE MONEY--BUT EVEN IF WE DO NOT, WE COULD HARDLY FIND SO MERCILESS A CREDITOR IN HIS SUCCESSOR. WE MAY SLEEP WELL TONIGHT, CAROLINE.
THEN IT WAS A HAPPIER HOUSE FOR THIS MAN'S DEATH! THE ONLY EMOTION HE SPIRIT COULD SHOW HIM, CAUSED BY THE EVENT, WAS ONE OF PLEASURE.
PLEASE, SPIRIT, LET ME SEE SOME TENDERNESS CONNECTED WITH A DEATH-- OR THAT DARK BED-CHAMBER WE JUST LEFT WILL HAUNT ME FOREVER.
THE SPIRIT SEEMED TO NOD...
...AND THEY WERE WITHIN BOB CRATCHIT'S POOR DWELLING QUIET, IT WAS VERY QU'ET...
HE WAS SO LIGHT TO CARRY, SO VERY LIGHT... NO TROUBLE AT ALL... AND SUCH A CHEERFUL LITTLE MAN FOR ALL HIS AFFLICTION...
DON'T BE GRIEVED, FATHER-- PLEASE DON'T.
SCROOGE SOBBED, SHOCKED AND SADDENED ALL AT ONCE...

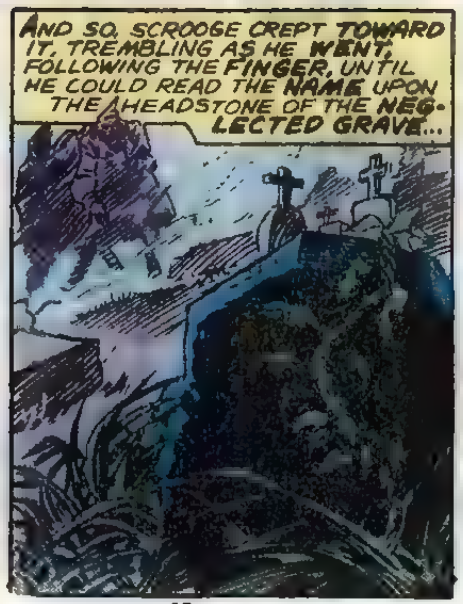

MY LITTLE CHILD... MY LITTLE CHILD! WE SHALL NEVER FORGET HIM, SHALL WE?
NEVER, FATHER.. NEVER.


THEN I AM HAPPY...I AM VERY HAPPY.
SPIRIT OF TINY TIM, THY CHILDISH ESSENCE WAS FROM GOD!
AND A SCENE OF TENDERNESS IT WAS... TENDERNESS TO MAKE THE HEART SOAR, AND ACHE FROM THE SOARING.


SPIRIT, SOMETHING INFORMS ME THAT OUR PARTING MOMENT IS AT HAND. TINY TIM HAS..HAS DIED.
BUT PLEASE... TELL ME... WHO WAS THE MAN WE SAW LYING DEAD?


A CHURCHYARD...A WORTHY PLACE, INDEED, TO LEARN THE WRETCHED MAN'S NAME.
BEFORE I DRAW NEARER TO THE STONE AT WHICH YOU POINT, ANSWER ME ONE QUESTION. ARE THESE THE SHADOWS OF THINGS THAT WILL BE--OR ARE THEY THE SHADOWS OF THINGS THAT ONLY MIGHT BE?
STILL THE GHOST POINTED DOWNWARD TO THE GRAVE.


THE COURSES OF MEN'S LIVES FORESHADOW CERTAIN ENDS TO WHICH THEY MUST LEAD-- BUT IF THE COURSES BE DEPARTED FROM, THE ENDS WILL CHANGE. SAY IT IS THUS WITH WHAT YOU SHOW ME!
THE SPIRIT WAS IMMOVABLE AS EVER.


AND SO, SCROOGE CREPT TOWARD IT, TREMBLING AS HE WENT, FOLLOWING THE FINGER, UNTIL HE COULD READ THE NAME UPON THE HEADSTONE OF THE NEGLECTED GRAVE...

NO--!

...HIS OWN NAME.

R.I.P
EBENEZER
SCROOGE

THEN... I WAS THE MAN WHO LAY UPON THAT BARE BED...?

THE FINGER POINTED AT HIS HEART AND SAID MORE LOUDLY THAN ANY WORD: YES!

SPIRIT, HEAR ME! I AM NOT THE MAN I ONCE WAS! I WILL NOT BE THE MAN I WOULD HAVE BEEN, IF NOT FOR THIS LESSON! WHY SHOW ME THIS IF I AM PAST ALL HOPE?!

R.I.P
EBENEZER
SCROOGE

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE FINGER APPEARED TO SHAKE.

GOOD SPIRIT, YOUR NATURE PITIES ME. ASSURE ME THAT I MAY YET CHANGE THESE SHADOWS YOU HAVE SHOWN ME--BY ALTERING MY LIFE!

THE KIND HAND TREMBLED.

I WILL HONOR CHRISTMAS IN MY HEART AND TRY TO KEEP IT ALL THE YEAR! I WILL LIVE IN THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE! THE SPIRITS OF ALL THREE SHALL STRIVE WITHIN ME! I WILL NOT SHUT OUT THE LESSONS THEY HAVE TAUGHT!

OH, TELL ME--TELL ME THAT I MAY ERASE THE WRITING ON THIS STONE!

IN HIS AGONY SCROOGE CAUGHT THE SPECTRAL HAND. IT SOUGHT TO FREE ITSELF, BUT HE WAS STRONG IN HIS ENTREATY

TELL ME!!

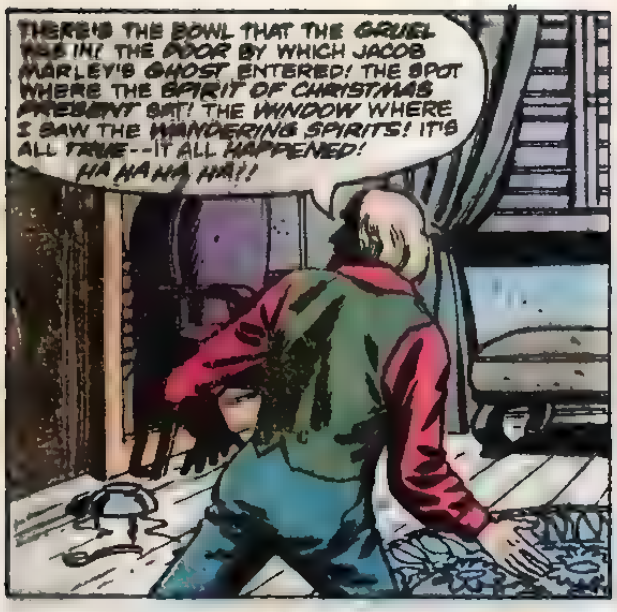
...AND THE PHANTOM SHRUNK...COLLAPSED...

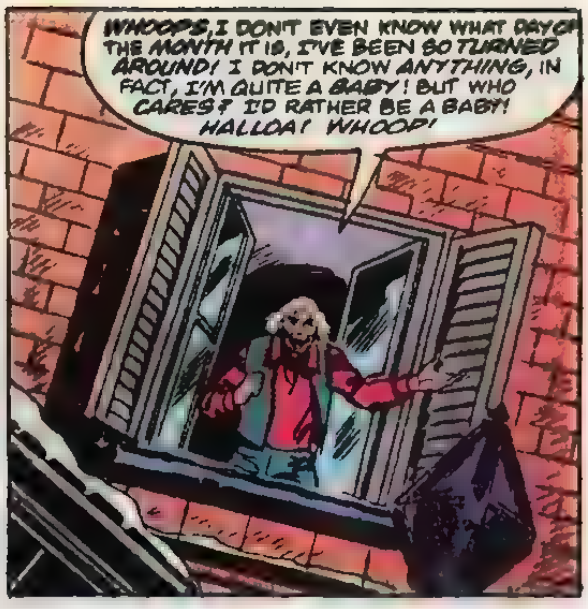
TELL... ME?

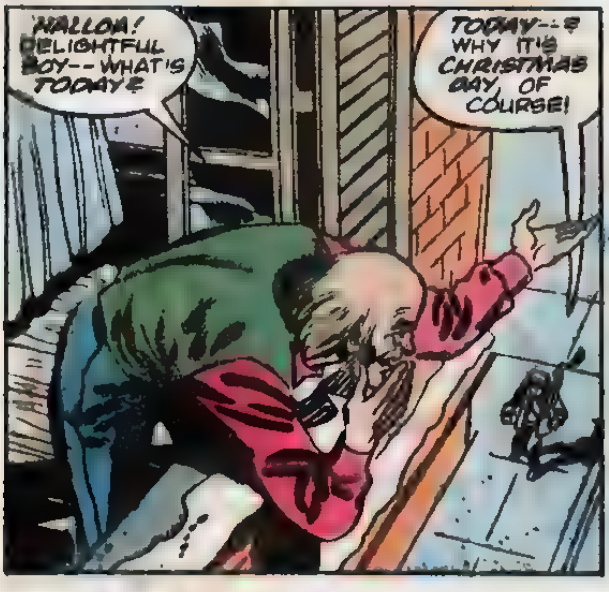
...AND DWINDLED DOWN INTO A BEDPOST.

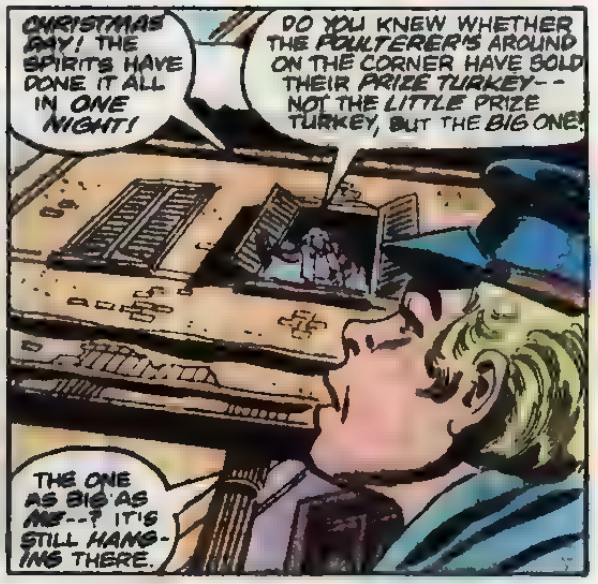
A...A... BED-POST--?

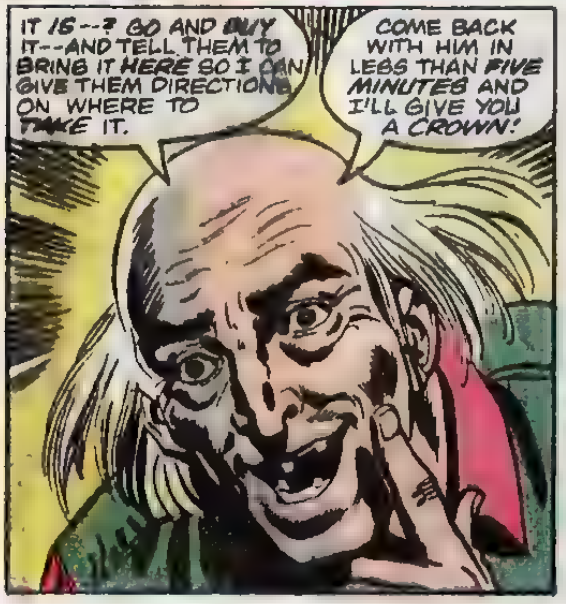
STAVE 5
The End of it.
HEAVEN AND CHRISTMASTIME BE PRAISED! I SAW IT WITH FULSOME HEART, OLD JACOB MARLEY--WITH FULSOME HEARTY
YES! AND THE BEDPOST WAS HIS OWN! THE WORD WAS HIS OWN--THE ROOM WAS HIS OWN! BEST AND HAPPIEST OF ALL, THE TIME BEFORE HIM WAS HIS OWN--TO MAKE AMENDS IN!
MY SHEETS! THEY ARE HERE! HOORAH!
THE SHADOWS OF THINGS THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN CAN BE DISPELLED! THEY WILL BE!
I KNOW THEY WILL! I'LL MAKE THEM CHANGE!
MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYBODY! WHOOP! HALLOA!


THERE'S THE BOWL THAT THE GRUEL WAS IN! THE DOOR BY WHICH JACOB MARLEY'S GHOST ENTERED! THE SPOT WHERE THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT SAT! THE WINDOW WHERE I SAW THE WANDERING SPIRITS! IT'S ALL TRUE--IT ALL HAPPENED!
HA HA HA HA!!

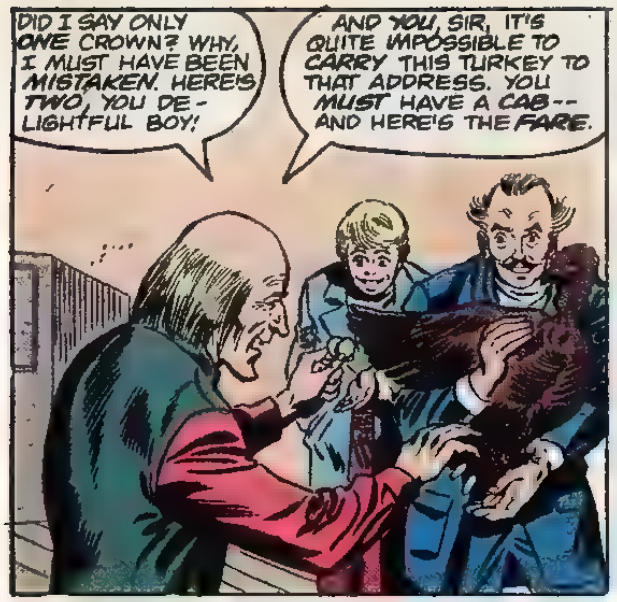

WHOOPS, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT DAY OF THE MONTH IT IS, I'VE BEEN SO TURNED AROUND! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING, IN FACT, I'M QUITE A BABY! BUT WHO CARES? I'D RATHER BE A BABY!
HALLOA! WHOOP!


HALLOA! DELIGHTFUL BOY--WHAT'S TODAY?
TODAY--? WHY IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY, OF COURSE!


CHRISTMAS DAY! THE SPIRITS HAVE DONE IT ALL IN ONE NIGHT!
DO YOU KNOW WHETHER THE POULTERER'S AROUND ON THE CORNER HAVE SOLD THEIR PRIZE TURKEY--NOT THE LITTLE PRIZE TURKEY, BUT THE BIG ONE!
THE ONE AS BIG AS ME--? IT'S STILL HANGING THERE.

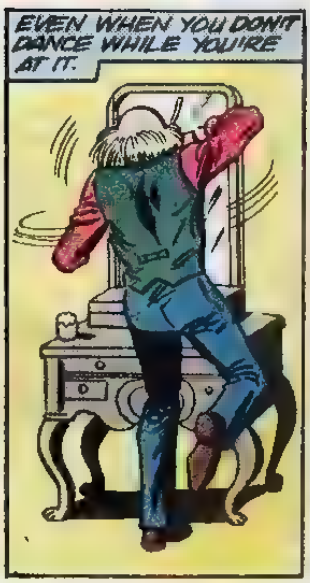

IT IS--? GO AND BUY IT--AND TELL THEM TO BRING IT HERE SO I CAN GIVE THEM DIRECTIONS ON WHERE TO TAKE IT.
COME BACK WITH HIM IN LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES AND I'LL GIVE YOU A CROWN!

I'LL SEND IT TO BOB CRATCHET--BUT HE'LL NEVER KNOW WHO SENT IT! HAH! A MYSTERY TWICE THE SIZE OF TINY TIM!

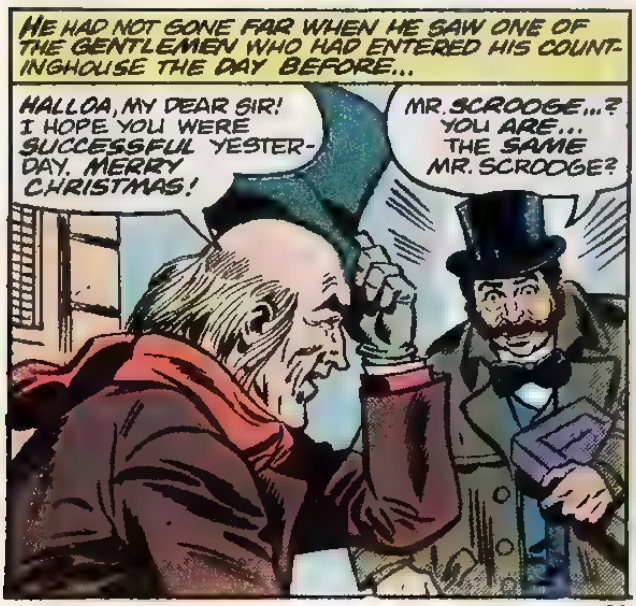

DID I SAY ONLY ONE CROWN? WHY, I MUST HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN. HERE'S TWO, YOU DE-LIGHTFUL BOY!
AND YOU, SIR, IT'S QUITE IMPOSSIBLE TO CARRY THIS TURKEY TO THAT ADDRESS. YOU MUST HAVE A CAB--AND HERE'S THE FARE.

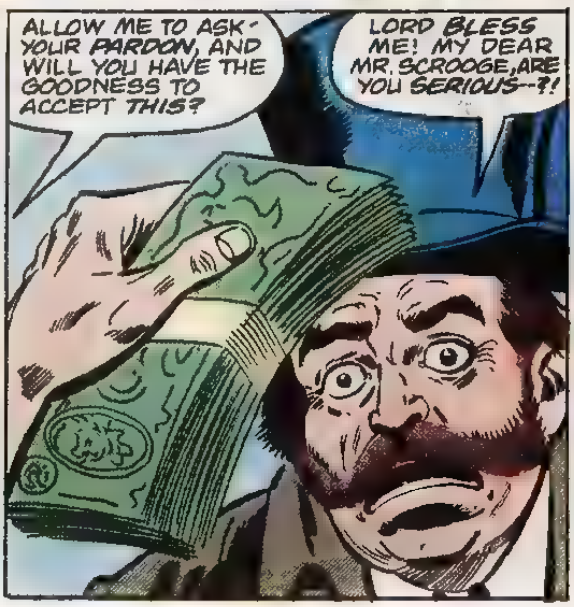
WHY, WHAT A WONDERFUL DOOR-KNOCKER--WHAT AN HONEST EXPRESSION ON ITS FACE! I SHALL LOVE IT AS LONG AS I LIVE!

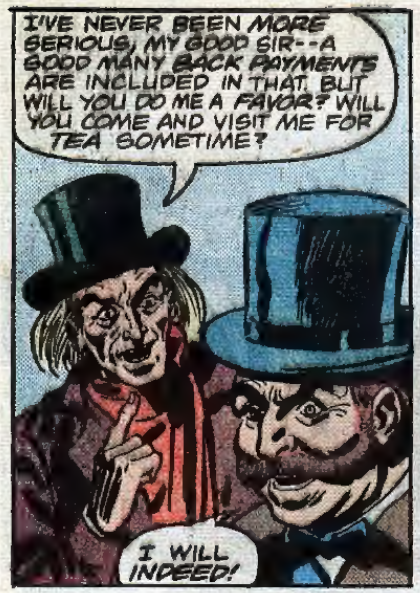
SHAVING WAS NOT AN EASY TASK, FOR HIS HAND CONTINUED TO SHAKE, AND SHAVING REQUIRES GREAT ATTENTION...


EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T DANCE WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.

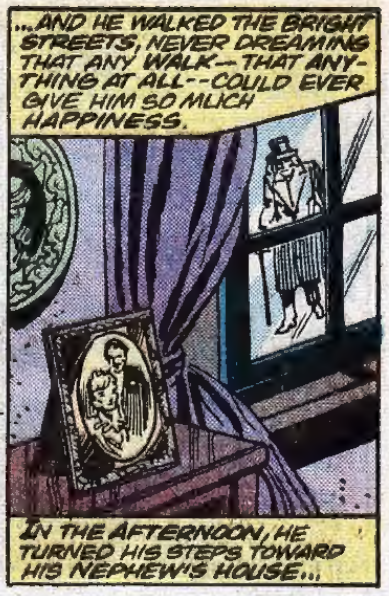
GOOD MORNING, SIR!
A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!


HE HAD NOT GONE FAR WHEN HE SAW ONE OF THE GENTLEMEN WHO HAD ENTERED HIS COUNTINGHOUSE THE DAY BEFORE...
HALLOA, MY DEAR SIR! I HOPE YOU WERE SUCCESSFUL YESTERDAY. MERRY CHRISTMAS!
MR. SCROOGE...? YOU ARE... THE SAME MR. SCROOGE?


ALLOW ME TO ASK-YOUR PARDON, AND WILL YOU HAVE THE GOODNESS TO ACCEPT THIS?
LORD BLESS ME! MY DEAR MR. SCROOGE, ARE YOU SERIOUS--?!

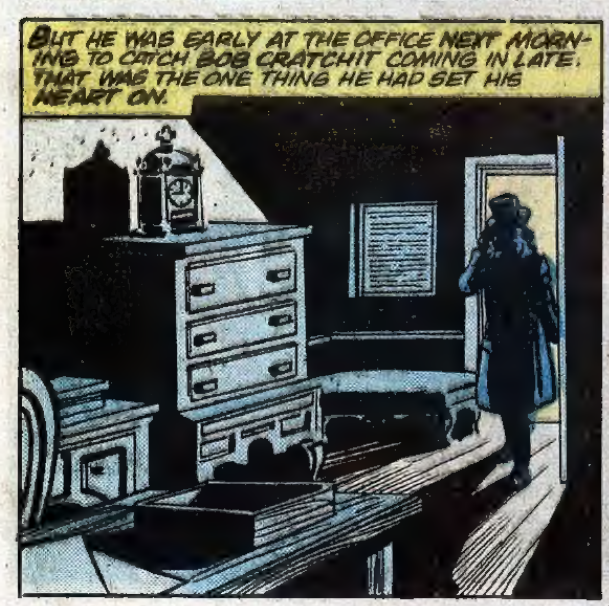

I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE SERIOUS, MY GOOD SIR--A GOOD MANY BACK PAYMENTS ARE INCLUDED IN THAT. BUT WILL YOU DO ME A FAVOR? WILL YOU COME AND VISIT ME FOR TEA SOMETIME?
I WILL INDEED!

HE WENT TO CHURCH, AND HE KNEW THE REAL JOY OF CHURCH FOR THE FIRST TIME...


...AND HE WALKED THE BRIGHT STREETS, NEVER DREAMING THAT ANY WALK--THAT ANYTHING AT ALL--COULD EVER GIVE HIM SO MUCH HAPPINESS.
IN THE AFTERNOON, HE TURNED HIS STEPS TOWARD HIS NEPHEW'S HOUSE...

WHY, BLESS MY SOUL! IT'S UNCLE SCROOGE!!
I HAVE COME FOR DINNER, FRED. WILL YOU LET ME IN?

SCROOGE WAS AT HOME IN FIVE MINUTES. IT WAS A WONDERFUL PARTY, WITH WONDERFUL GAMES, WONDERFUL MUSIC, WONDERFUL HAPPINESS!


BUT HE WAS EARLY AT THE OFFICE NEXT MORNING TO CATCH BOB CRATCHIT COMING IN LATE. THAT WAS THE ONE THING HE HAD SET HIS HEART ON.

HALLO! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY COMING HERE AT THIS TIME OF DAY?!
I'M SORRY, SIR. I AM LATE--BUT IT'S ONLY ONCE A YEAR. I WAS MAKING RATHER MERRY YESTERDAY, SIR...

MAKING MERRY, WERE YOU? WELL, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, MY FRIEND, I AM NOT GOING TO STAND FOR THIS SORT OF THING ANY LONGER!
AND THERE-FORE...
...I'M GOING TO RAISE YOUR SALARY! HA HA HA!
A MERRY CHRISTMAS, BOB--A MERRIER ONE THAN I'VE EVER GIVEN YOU! WE SHALL DISCUSS YOUR FUTURE AFFAIRS THIS VERY AFTERNOON OVER A CHRISTMAS BOWL OF PLUM PUDDING!
AND GO OUT AND BUY US A LARGE LOAD OF COAL BEFORE YOU CROSS ANOTHER "T" BOB CRATCHIT!
SCROOGE WAS BETTER THAN HIS WORD. HE DID IT ALL, AND INFINITELY MORE--AND TO TINY TIM (WHO DID NOT DIE), HE BECAME A SECOND FATHER.
MERRY
HE HAD NO FURTHER DEALINGS WITH SPIRITS, BUT IT WAS ALWAYS SAID OF HIM THAT HE KNEW HOW TO KEEP THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT WELL--IF ANY MAN ALIVE POSSESSED THAT KNOWLEDGE. AND MAY THAT BE TRULY SAID OF US--ALL OF US--FOR, AS TINY TIM OBSERVED ON THE NEXT CHRISTMAS...
GOOD BLESS US--EVERY ONE!!

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